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POETS ON POETS

POETS ON POETS

EDITED BY

MRS. RICHARD STRACHEY



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INTRODUCTION.

IN the preface to his great play, "All for Love," Dryden asserts that "poets themselves are the most proper, though not the only critics of poetry," and thinks it "reasonable that the judgment of an artificer in his art should be preferable to the opinion of another man; at least, where he is not bribed by interest or prejudiced by malice." English poets from Jonson to Swinburne have not been backward in exercising the function of critics on their fellows; but it is specially remarkable that almost every memorable poet throughout the illustrious head-roll has expressed an opinion in verse on the poetical qualities of some or other of his predecessors or contemporaries. The circumstance that the poetic succession has been carried on by a series of groups or clusters, has given us, in addition to individual appreciations, a body of criticism revealing the artistic point of

view in each successive period with remarkable clearness. To present this body of expert criticism in a continuous form is the object of the present volume. It is a collection of those passages in our literature where poets, themselves of distinction, have cast into a poetic form their judgment on others worthy of the title. This last limitation necessarily excludes a large quantity of verse excellent as satire and criticism, but dealing with poor little rhymesters whose pillories may well be left in an outer court: so, too, whatever is concerned with the man alone and not the writer has been omitted, such as Pope's portrait of Addison as Atticus, and Churchill's of Johnson as Pomposo. I have not thought it necessary to include bad verse by good poets, nor to reject the occasional instances where a versifier has risen to a higher level; in these cases, as in the anonymous lines signed "I. M. S.," the poem itself vouches for the right of the author to sit among the judges.

I have said that almost every great poet has a place in this collection; the most noteworthy exceptions are Marlowe and Shakespeare. This is nothing surprising in the case of Marlowe, who died quite at the beginning of the great outburst of poetical

activity which his genius directed and inspired. But it is certainly curious that Shakespeare neither wrote, nor received during his life-time, any of those commendatory verses which it was the universal custom of his contemporaries to address to one another; a custom which, though often a mere form of perfunctory congratulation of no value either as poetry or criticism, gave occasion for much of high merit in both. The only known publication in which the author's work is followed by verses signed W. Shakespeare, in company with others by Chapman, Ben Jonson, and Marston, is an allegorical poem by Robert Chester,¹ the inner meaning of which is unintelligible to us; Shakespeare's lines contain no reference to the author, but are an equally obscure poem on the same subject as his. There was, however, one occasion on which Shakespeare broke a silence, which we cannot avoid concluding was deliberate, and gave us in a few incisive strokes his judgment on one of the master poets of the age—an "able spirit" who wrote "above a mortal pitch"; he notes "his polish'd form of well-refinèd pen," his "pre-

¹ "Love's Martyrdom, or Rosalin's Complaint," 1601. Shakespeare's lines are headed "The Phoenix and the Turtle."

cious phrase by all the Muses filed," and records in one splendid line "the proud full sail of his great verse." But though the wreath is there, we know not on whose brow to place it; the mystery which surrounds the whole subject of the sonnets enwraps the rival poet too; whether it were Spenser, Chapman, Daniel, or another, we know only that he has been mocked by Fate, who withheld, whilst she seemed to bestow, the proudest title ever poet earned—He whom Shakespeare praised.

It is evident that, on the whole, the judgment of the poets in session agrees altogether with the popular verdict; this would naturally be the case as regards the greatest of those brought before the bar; the heart of mankind and the conscience of the artist must alike acknowledge their supremacy. From the voice of Spenser, ushering in the heroic age of English song, to that of Tennyson, hushed but yesterday, Chaucer is hailed as Master; the great singers of every age salute as they pass the mighty shades of Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton. But what is perhaps noteworthy is that the poets have so few favourites apart from the general; I can name only two whose popularity having died with the public has survived with suc-

cessive generations of poets—Sidney and Cowley. The preferences of individual poets are of interest ; we find something agreeably incongruous in the devotion of Herrick the dainty to Ben Jonson, in the gentle Cowper's admiration of Churchill, and the ardour of Byron for Pope, and Southey's solemn adoration of Spenser ; but it is when we study the collective attitude of criticism, characterizing successive periods of poetic energy, that we find most to attract and impress us. Nothing, for instance, is more startling to a reader than to step out of the world of Elizabethans into that of their successors after the Restoration ; there is hardly a deeper stroke of irony in the drama of human existence. Of all that earlier throng, brimful of vehement vitality, whom we have seen jostling one another with cries of applause and derision, who had so superb a consciousness of power, such full assurance of high endeavour and noble achievement and immortal worth, four names only are found on the lips of the men who next fill their places as Masters of English song : Spenser, Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Fletcher—these alone, for nearly two hundred years, lived with the living, while of the rest not even the poor ghosts remained to haunt the realms of imagination. It is not that

INTRODUCTION.

they were overtaken by the common lot of those whose pipe, sweet to contemporary ears, cannot carry its sound beyond them—that in each new generation “many a splendour finds its tomb, many spent fames and fallen might;” it was the advent of such a radical change in the whole conception of art, as for a time—a long time—doomed some of the glories of English literature not only to neglect but oblivion. For the seventeenth and eighteenth-century poets, those of the sixteenth were blind and barbarous forces, gifted, some of them, with an elemental genius which made its way to greatness by sheer abundance, but lacking in all artistic capacity. That the magnificent craftsmanship which from Marlowe to Milton, through so many workmen and to such varied music, hammered out the instrument of blank verse, should receive no recognition, even from Dryden, is amazing; and not less so is the insensibility to the technical perfection of a host of lyrics unequalled in any language but the Greek. The want of proportion in design and of sobriety in treatment which characterizes most of the Elizabethan writers, and their generally imperfect handling of the heroic couplet in pieces of any length, blinded their successors to the mastery in their art

which they had attained through strenuous and self-conscious effort.

There is no such violent disruption of continuity in the new upheaval of poetry which marked the beginning of the nineteenth century ; re-action, inevitable, though long-delayed, carried with it no consequences so grave to art and so unjust to individual artists. Brilliant, flexible and appropriate diction, a new sense of the beauty of what is decorous and controlled, and complete mastery over the vibrant weapon of satire, are the gifts bestowed on English literature by the race of poets over whom Pope was long acknowledged chief ; gifts which she has never again suffered to drop from her hands. And the harbingers of a wider poetic vision in their return to the great masters of an early day were not unjust to those of a later ; Dryden is caught up with Shakespeare and Milton in the famous ode wherein Gray lifts them from the plane of unimpassioned comment to the firmament of lyric adoration. If in after days Pope paid for his unequalled prestige by a share in the contempt which fell on his followers for doing ill what he did so well, his unpopularity was at least no result of ignorance, but rather of an excessive familiarity that dulled men's ears to the merit

which was its cause. Of these followers Goldsmith survives through a genius which had a touch of the lyrical ; but to the rest—the long inglorious list of Hills and Langhorne's and Whiteheads who strove to uphold Pope's standard and govern in his name—the victory of the insurgent forces brought not so much defeat as annihilation ; the scattered fire of Collins, Gray, and Chatterton, the gradual mine of Thomson and Cowper, the splendid cavalry charge of Burns, preceded an unopposed march of the great army which, advancing in separate columns under the leadership of Wordsworth, Scott, and Byron, secured the dominion of a new dynasty.

The work of their predecessors and contemporaries was of keen interest to the new poets, as the abundant extracts from their works testify. They, in their turn, are awaiting the verdict of their successors.

In arranging this book I have as far as possible placed the poets in order of time, contemporaries necessarily over-lapping, while the order of the extracts from their works has been determined, not by the date of the poem but of the poet who is the subject of it. There will, no doubt, be differences of

opinion regarding the selection; I have leaned rather to inclusion than to omission. Believing with Mr. Palgrave that "a book planned for popular use half defeats its own object by adherence to unfamiliar modes of spelling," I have modernized all the spelling except that of the first period, from Chaucer to Lydgate, where it cannot be done without affecting the verse. Living poets are excluded, but death has lately removed so many from among us, that the first generation of Victorian poets may be said to have taken their places on the bench with their illustrious precursors. The restrictions imposed on my selections by the operation of the law of copyright have fortunately been few; my thanks are specially due to Messrs. Macmillan for their liberality in giving me complete freedom of choice in those cases in which their interests are affected, viz., in the Poems of Mr. Matthew Arnold and Lord Tennyson. By this courtesy we are enabled to follow the noble procession without interruption from Chaucer to our own day, keeping still abreast of the strong and flowing tide of

"Poetry's unfailing river,
Which through Albion winds for ever,
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred poet's grave."

J. M. S.

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“An English Poet should be tried by his Peers.”

PERIOD I.

POETS BORN IN THE
XIVTH CENTURY.

CHAUCER TO LYDGATE.

POETS ON POETS.

CHAUCER.

From Troilus and Cressida. [c. 1380

O MORALL Gower, this booke I direct Gower.
To thee, and to the philosophical Strode,
To vouchsafe there neede is, to correct,
Of your benignities and zealess good.

GOWER.

From Confessio Amantis. [c. 1383

Venus speaks.

AND grete well Chaucer, whan ye mete, Chaucer.
As my disciple and my poete,
For in the floures of his youth,
In sondry wise, as he well couth,
Of dittees and of songes glade,
The which he for my sake made,
The lond fulfilled is over all,
Whereof to him in speciall
Above all other I am most holde.
Forthy now in his daies olde
Thou shalt him telle this message,

OCCLEVE.

That he upon his later age
To sette an end of all his werke,
As he, which is min owne clerke,
Do make his testament of love,
As thou hast do thy shrifte above,
So that my court it may récorde.

OCCLEVE. [1411-12

From The Regement of Princes.

BUT weleaway ! so is myne hert wo
That the honour of Englysshe tonge is dede,
Of which I was wonte have counseile and rede.

O maister dere and fader reverent,
My maister Chaucer, floure of eloquence,
Mirrour of fructuous entendment,
O universal fader in science,
Allas ! that thou thyne excellent prudence
In thy bedde mortel myghtest not bequethe.
What eyled dethe, allas ! why wolde he sle the ?

O dethe, though didest not harm singulere
In slaughtre of hym, but alle this londe it smertethe ;
But natheles yit hast thow no powere
His name to slee ; his hye vertu astertethe
Unslayne fro the, which ay us lyfly hertyth
Withe bookes of his ornat endityng
That is to alle this lande enlumynyng.

* * * * *

Allas ! my worthy maister honorable,
 This londes verray tresour and richesse,
 Dethe by thy dethe hathe harme irreperable
 . Unto us done, hir vengeable duresse
 Despoilede hathe this londe of swetnesse
 Of rethoryk frō us, to Tullius
 Was never man so like amonge us.

Also who was hyer in filosofye
 To Aristotle in our tunge but thou ?
 The steppes of Virgile in poysye
 Thou folwedest eke, men wote wele ynow.
 That combreworlde that my maister slow,
 Wolde I slayne were ! dethe was to hastyfe,
 To renne on the and reve the thy lyfe.

* * * * *

She myght han taryede her vengeaunce a while,
 Til that some man hade egalle to the be.
 Nay, lete be that ! she knew wele that this yle
 May never man bryng forthe like to the,
 And hir office nedes do mote she ;
 God bade hir do so, I truste for the beste.
 O maister, maister, God thy soule reste !

LYDGATE.

[c. 1420

From Prologue to the Story of Thebes.

MY maister Chaucer, with his fresh commedies,
 Is deed, alas ! chefe poete of Bretayne,
 That sometime made full piteous tragedies,

Chaucer.

The fall of princes, he did also complayne,
 As he that was of makynge soverayne,
 Whom all this lande of right ought preferre,
 Sithe of our language he was the lode-sterre.

By hym that was, yf I shall not fayne,
 Floure of Poetes, thorough out of all Bretayne,
 Whiche sothly had moost of excellence
 In Rethoryke and in eloquence.
 Rede his mākyng, who lyst the trouthe fynde
 Which never shall appallen in my mynde,
 But alwaye freshe ben in my memorye,
 To whom be yeve pryse, honour and glorye
 Of well sayeing.

[c. 1430-1438]

From Prologue to the Translation of
 Boccaccio's Fall of Princes.

THIS sayed poete, my maister, in his dayes
 Made and composed ful many a fresh dite,
 •Complaintes, ballades, roundeles, virelaies,
 Full delectable to heren and to se.
 For which men shulde of right and equite,
 Sith he of English in making was the best,
 Pray unto God to yeve his soule good rest.

[c. 1422]

From The Praise of the Virgin Mary.

AND eke my master Chaucer is now in grave,
 The noble rhetor poete of Bretayne.

LYDGATE.

That worthy was the lawrer to have
Of poetrye, and the palme attayne,
That made first to dystylle and rayne
The gold dewe dropys of speche and eloquence
Into our tunge through his excellence,

And fonde the flouris first of rethoryke
Our rude speche only to enlumyne,
That in our tunge was never none him lyke ;
For as the sonne doth in heven shyne
In mydday spere down to us by lyne,
In whose presence no sterre may appere,
Right so his ditees withouten ony pere.

PERIOD II.

POETS BORN IN THE
XVTH CENTURY.

SURREY TO HERRICK.

SURREY.

[1542

On the Death of Sir Thomas Wyatt.

WYATT resteth here, that quick could never rest : Wyatt.

Whose heavenly gifts increased by disdain ;

And virtue sank the deeper in his breast :

Such profit he by envy could obtain.

A head, whose wisdom mysteries did frame ;

Whose hammers beat still in that lively brain,

As on a stithe where that some work of fame

Was daily wrought, to turn to Britain's gain.

A visage stern, and mild ; where both did grow

Vice to contempt, in virtue to rejoice :

Amid great storms, whom grace assured so,

To live upright, and smile at fortune's choice.

A hand, that taught what might be said in rime ;

That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit—

Chaucer.

A mark, the which (unperfected for time)

Some may approach, but never none shall hit.

A tongue that served in foreign realms his king ;

Whose courteous talk to virtue did inflame

Each noble heart ; a worthy guide to bring

Our English youth by travail unto fame.

An eye, whose judgment none effect could blind,

Friends to allure and foes to reconcile ;

Whose piercing look did represent a mind

With virtue fraught, reposèd, void of guile.
 A heart, whose dread was never so impress'd
 To hide the thought that might the truth advance ;
 In neither fortune loft, nor yet repress'd,
 To swell in wealth, or yield unto mischance.
 A valiant corpse, where force and beauty met :
 Happy, alas ! too happy, but for foes,
 Livèd, and ran the race that nature set ;
 Of manhood's shape, where she the mould did
 lose.

But to the heavens that simple soul is fled,
 Which left, with such as covet Christ to know,
 Witness of faith, that never shall be dead ;
 Sent for our health, but not receivèd so.
 Thus for our guilt this jewel have we lost ;
 The earth his bones, the heavens possess his
 ghost.

SPENSER.

From The Shepherd's Calendar. [1579

February.

Thenot. But shall I tell thee a tale of truth,
 aucer. Which I conned of Tityrus in my youth,
 Keeping his sheep on the hills of Kent ?

Cuddie. To nought more, Thenot, my mind is
 bent

Then to hear novels of his devise ;
 They been so well thewed, and so wise
 What ever that good old man bespake.

The. Many meet tales of youth did he make,
 And some of love, and some of chivalry.

June.

Hobbinoll. Colin, to hear thy rimes and rounde- Spenser
lays,

Which thou wert wont on wasteful hills to sing,
I more delight than lark in summer days,
Whose echo made the neighbour groves to ring,
And taught the birds, which in the lower spring
Did shroud in shady leaves from sunny rays,
Frame to thy song their cheerful chirruping,
Or hold their peace, for shame of thy sweet lays.

I saw Calliope with Muses moe,
Soon as thy oaten pipe began to sound,
Their ivory lutes and tambourines forego,
And from the fountain, where they sat around,
Run after hastily thy silver sound ;
But, when they came where thou thy skill didst
show,
They drew aback, as half with shame confound
Shepherd to see, them in their art outgo.

Colin. Of Muses, Hobbinoll, I conne no skill,
For they been daughters of the highest Jove,
And holden scorn of homely shepherd's quill ;
For sith I heard that Pan with Phoebus strove,
Which him to much rebuke and danger drove,
I never list presume to Parnasse hill,
But, piping low in shade of lowly grove,
I play to please myself, albeit ill.

Nought weigh I, who my song doth praise or
blame,
Ne strive to win renown, or pass the rest :

With shepherd sits not follow flying Fame,
But feed his flock in fields where falls them best.
I wot my rimes been rough, and rudely drest ;
The fitter they my careful case to frame :
Enough is me to paint out my unrest,
And pour my piteous plaints out in the same.

The God of shepherds, Tityrus, is dead,
Who taught me homely, as I can, to make :
He, whilst he livèd, was the sovereign head
Of shepherds all that been with love ytake :
Well could he wail his woes, and lightly slake
The flames which love within his heart had bred,
And tell us merry tales to keep us wake,
The while our sheep about us safely fed.

Now dead he is, and lieth wrapt in lead,
(O why should Death on him such outrage show !)
And all his passing skill with him is fled,
The fame whereof doth daily greater grow.
But, if on me some little drops would flow
Of that the spring was in his learned head,
I soon would learn these woods to wail my woe,
And teach the trees their trickling tears to shed.

December.

AND for I was in thilke same looser years,
(Whether the Muse so wrought me from my birth,
Or I too much believed my shepherd peers,)
Some deal ybent to song and musick's mirth,
A good old shepherd, Wrenock was his name,
Made me by art more cunning in the same.

Fro thence I durst in derring to compare
 With shepherd's swain whatever fed in field ;
 And, if that Hobbinoll right judgment bare,
 To Pan his own self pipe I need not yield :
 For if the flocking Nymphs did follow Pan,
 The wiser Muses after Colin ran.

Spenser.

From The Fairy Queen. [1590

WHILOME as antique stories tellen us,
 Those two were foes the fellonest on ground,
 And battle made the dreadest dangerous
 That ever shrilling trumpet did resound ;
 Though now their acts be no where to be found,
 As that renowned poet them compiled Chaucer.
 With warlike numbers and heroic sound,
 Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled,
 On Fame's eternal beadroll worthy to be filed.

• But wicked Time that all good thoughts doth
 waste,
 And works of noblest wits to nought outwear,
 That famous monument hath quite defaced
 And robb'd the world of treasure endless dear,
 The which mote have enriched all us here.
 O cursèd Eld, the canker-worm of writs !
 How may these rimes so rude as doth appear
 Hope to endure, sith works of heavenly wits
 Are quite devour'd, and brought to nought by
 little bits.

Then pardon, O most sacred happy Spirit,
 That I thy labours lost may thus revive,

And steal from thee the meed of thy due merit,
That none durst ever whilst thou wast alive,
And, being dead, in vain yet many strive :
Ne dare I like ; but, through infusion sweet
Of thine own spirit which doth in me survive,
I follow here the footing of thy feet,
That with thy meaning so I may the rather meet.

[1595

From Colin Clout's come home again.

"ONE day (quoth he) I sat (as was my trade)
Under the foot of Mole, that mountain hoar,
Keeping my sheep amongst the cooly shade
Of the green alders by the Mulla's shore :
There a strange shepherd chanced to find me out,
Whether allurèd with my pipe's delight,
Whose pleasing sound yshrilled far about,
Or thither led by chance, I know not right :
Whom when I asked from what place he came,
And how he hight, himself he did y'cleepe
The Shepherd of the Ocean by name,
And said he came far from the main-sea deep.
He, sitting me beside in that same shade,
Provokèd me to play some pleasant fit ;
And, when he heard the music which I made,
He found himself full greatly pleased at it :
Yet, æmuling my pipe, he tooke in hond
My pipe, before that æmulèd of many,
And play'd thereon (for well that skill he conn'd) ;
Himself as skilful in that art as any.
He piped, I sung ; and, when he sung, I piped ;
By change of turns, each making other merry ;

Neither envying other, nor envied.
So piped we, until we both were weary."

* * * * *

"Why? (said Alexis then) what needeth she
That is so great a shepherdess herself,
And hath so many shepherds in her fee,
To hear thee sing, a simple silly Elf?
Or be the shepherds which do serve her lazy,
That they list not their merry pipes apply?
Or be their pipes untunable and crazy,
That they cannot her honour worthily?"

"Ah nay (said Colin) neither so, nor so :
For better shepherds be not under sky,
Nor better able, when they list to blow
Their pipes aloud, her name to glorify.
There is good Harpalus, now woxen aged
In faithful service of fair Cynthia :
And there is Corydon, though meanly waged,
Yet ablest wit of most I know this day.
And there is sad Alcyon bent to mourn,
Though fit to frame an everlasting ditty,
Whose gentle spright for Daphne's death doth turn
Sweet lays of love to endless plaints of pity.
Ah ! pensive boy, pursue that brave conceit,
In thy sweet Eglantine of Meriflure ;
Lift up thy notes unto their wonted height,
That may the Muse and mates to mirth allure.
There eke is Palin worthy of great praise,
Albe he envy at my rustic quill :
And there is pleasing Alcon, could he raise
His tunes from lays to matter of more skill.
And there is old Palemon free from spite,
Whose careful pipe may make the hearer rue :

Yet he himself may ruëd be more right,
That sung so long until quite hoarse he grew,
And there is Alabaster thoroughly taught
In all this skill, though knowen yet to few ;
Yet were he known to Cynthia as he ought,
His Eliseis would be read anew. •
Who lives that can match that heroic song,
Which he hath of that mighty princess made ?
O dreaded Dread, do not thy self that wrong,
To let thy fame lie so in hidden shade :
But call it forth, O call him forth to thee,
To end thy glory which he hath begun :
That, when he finish'd hath as it should be,
No braver poem can be under sun.
Nor Po nor Tybur's swans so much renown'd,
Nor all the brood of Greece so highly praised,
Can match that Muse when it with bays is crown'd,
And to the pitch of her perfection raised.
And there is a new shepherd late up sprong,
The which doth all afore him far surpass :
Appearing well in that well-tunèd song,
Which late he sung unto a scornful Lass.
Yet doth his trembling Muse but lowly fly,
As daring not too rashly mount on height,
And doth her tender plumes as yet but try
In love's soft lays and looser thoughts' delight.
Then rouse thy feathers quickly, Daniel,
And to what course thou please thyself advance :
But most, me seems, thy accent will excel
In tragic plaints and passionate mischance.
And there that shepherd of the Ocean is,
That spends his wit in Love's consuming smart :
Full sweetly temper'd is that Muse of his, •

That can empierce a prince's mighty heart.
 There also is (ah no, he is not now !)
 But since I said he is, he quite is gone,
 Amyntas quite is gone and lies full low,
 Having his Amaryllis left to moan.
 Help, O ye shepherds, help ye all in this,
 Help Amaryllis this her loss to mourn :
 Her loss 'is yours, your loss Amyntas is,
 Amyntas, flower of shepherds' pride forlorn :
 He whilst he livèd was the noblest swain
 That ever pipèd on an oaten quill :
 Both did he other, which could pipe, maintain,
 And eke could pipe himself with passing skill.
 And there, though last not least, is Ætion ;
 A gentler shepherd may no where be found :
 Whose Muse, full of high thoughts' invention,
 Doth like himself heroically sound.
 All these, and many others mo remain,
 Now, after Astrofell is dead and gone :
 But, while as Astrofell did live and reign,
 Amongst all these was none his paragon.
 All these do flourish in their sundry kind,
 And do their Cynthia immortal make :
 Yet found I liking in her royal mind,
 Not for my skill, but for that shepherd's sake."

Sidney

From The Ruins of Time. [1591

YET will I sing ; but who can better sing
 Than thou thy self, thine own self's valiance,
 That, while thou livedst, madest the forests ring,
 And fields resound, and flocks to leap and dance,
 And shepherds leave their lambs unto mischance,

Sidney.

To run thy shrill Arcadian pipe to hear :
O happy were those days, thrice happy were !

But now more happy thou, and wretched we,
Which want the wonted sweetness of thy voice,
Whiles thou now in Elysian fields so free,
With Orpheus, and with Linus, and the choice
Of all that ever did in rimes rejoice,
Conversest, and dost hear their heavenly lays,
And they hear thine, and thine do better praise.

So there thou livest, singing evermore,
And here thou livest, being ever song
Of us, which living lovèd thee afore,
And now thee worship 'mongst that blessed throng
Of heavenly Poets and Heroës strong.
So thou both here and there immortal art,
And everywhere through excellent desert.

[1591

From L'Envoy to the Ruins of Time.

IMMORTAL spirit of Philisides,
Which now art made the heavens' ornament,
That whilome wast the world's chiefst riches ;
Give leave to him that loved thee to lament
His loss, by lack of thee to heaven hent,
And with last duties of this broken verse,
Broken with sighs, to deck thy sable hearse !

From Astrophel.

[1595

A GENTLE shepherd born in Arcady,
Of gentlest race that ever shepherd bore,

About the grassy banks of Hæmony
Did keep his sheep, his little stock and store.
Full carefully he kept them day and night,
In fairest fields ; and Astrophel he hight.

Young Astrophel, the pride of shepherd's praise,
Young Astrophel, the rustic lasses' love :
Far passing all the pastors of his days
In all that seemly shepherd might behove.
In one thing only failing of the best,
That he was not so happy as the rest.

For from the time that first the nymph his mother
Him forth did bring, and taught her lambs to feed ;
A slender swain, excelling far each other,
In comely shape, like her that did him breed,
He grew up fast in goodness and in grace,
And doubly fair woxe both in mind and face.

Which daily more and more he did augment,
With gentle usage and demeanour mild :
That all men's hearts with secret ravishment
He stole away, and weetingly beguiled.
Ne spite itself, that all good things doth spill,
Found ought in him, that she could say was ill.

His sports were fair, his joyance innocent,
Sweet without sour, and honey without gall ;
And he himself seem'd made for merriment,
Merrily masking both in bower and hall.
There was no pleasure nor delightful play,
When Astrophel so ever was away.

For he could pipe, and dance, and carol sweet,
Amongst the shepherds in their shearing feast ;
As summer's lark that with her song doth greet
The dawning day forth coming from the East.
And lays of love he also could compose :
Thrice happy she, whom he to praise did chose.

Full many maidens often did him woo,
Them to vouchsafe amongst his rimes to name,
Or make for them as he was wont to do
For her that did his heart with love inflame.
For which they promised to dight for him
Gay chapelets of flowers and garlands trim.

And many a nymph both of the wood and brook,
Soor as his oaten pipe began to shrill,
Both crystal wells and shady groves forsook,
To hear the charms of his enchanting skill ;
And brought him presents, flowers if it were prime,
Or mellow fruit if it were harvest time.

But he for none of them did care a whit,
Yet woodgods for them often sighèd sore ;
Ne for their gifts unworthy of his wit,
Yet not unworthy of the country's store.
For one alone he cared, for one he sigh't,
His life's desire, and his dear love's delight.

Stella the fair, the fairest star in sky,
As fair as Venus or the fairest fair,
(A fairer star saw never living eye),
Shot her sharp-pointed beams through purest air.
Her he did love, her he alone did honour,
His thoughts, his rimes, his songs were all upon
her.

To her he vow'd the service of his days,
 On her he spent the riches of his wit :
 For her he made hymns of immortal praise,
 Of only her he sung, he thought, he writ.
 Her, and but her, of love he worthy deem'd ;
 For all the rest* but little he esteem'd.

Ne her with idle words aloſe he woo'd,
 And verses vain, (yet verses are not vain),
 But with brave deeds to her sole service vow'd,
 And bold achievements he did entertain.
 For both in words and deeds he nurtured was,
 Both wise and hardy, (too hardy, alas !).

In wrestling nimble, and in running swift,
 In shooting steady, and in swimming strong ;
 Well made to strike, to throw, to leap, to lift,
 And all the sports that shepherds are among,
 In every one he vanquish'd every one,
 He vanquish'd'all, and vanquish'd was of none.

To Sir Walter Raleigh. [1590

To thee, that art the summer's nightingale,
 Thy sovereign goddess' most dear delight,
 Why do I send this rustic madrigale
 That may thy tuneful ear unseason quite ?
 Thou only fit this argument to write,
 In whose high thoughts Pleasure hath built her
 bower,
 And dainty Love learn'd sweetly to endite.
 My rimes I know unsavoury and sour,
 To taste the streams that, like a golden shower,
 Flow from thy fruitful head of thy Love's praise ;

Fitter perhaps to thunder martial stour,
Whenso thee list thy lofty Muse to raise :
Yet, till that thou thy poem wilt make known,
Let thy fair Cynthia's praises be thus rudely shown.

ROYDON.

From An Elegy. [1598

You knew, who knew not Astrophill ?
(That I should live to say I knew,
And have not in possession still !)
Things known permit me to renew ;
Of him you know his merit such,
I cannot say, you hear, too much.

Within these woods of Arcadie
He chief delight and pleasure took,
And on the mountain Parthenie,
Upon the crystal liquid brook,
The Muses met him every day,
That taught him sing, to write, and say.

When he descended down the mount,
His personage seemed most divine,
A thousand graces one might count
Upon his lovely cheerful eyne ;
To hear him speak and sweetly smile,
You were in Paradise the while.

A sweet attractive kind of grace,
A full assurance given by looks,

Continual comfort in a face,
The lineaments of Gospel books ;
I trow that countenance cannot lie,
Whose thoughts are legible in the eye.

Was never eye did see that face,
Was never ear did hear that tongue,
Was never mind did mind his grace,
That ever thought the travail long ;
But eyes and ears and every thought,
Were with his sweet perfections caught.

O God, that such a worthy man,
In whom so rare deserts did reign,
Desirèd thus, must leave us than,
And we to wish for him in vain !
O could the stars, that bred that wit,
In force no longer fixed sit !

Then being fill'd with learned dew,
The Muses willed him to love ;
That instrument can aptly shew
How finely our conceits will move ;
As Bacchus opes dissembled hearts,
So Love sets out our better parts.

Stella, a nymph within this wood,
Most rare and rich of heavenly bliss,
The highest in his fancy stood,
And she could well demerit this ;
'Tis likely they acquainted soon ;
He was a sun, and she a moon.

Our Astrophill did Stella love ;
O Stella, vaunt of Astrophill,

Albeit thy graces gods may move,
Where wilt thou find an Astrophill !
The rose and lily have their prime,
And so hath beauty but a time.

Although thy beauty do exceed
In common sight of every eye,
Yet in his poesies when we read,
It is apparent more thereby,
He that hath love and judgment too,
Sees more than any other do.

Then Astrophill hath honour'd thee ;
For when thy body is extinct,
Thy graces shall eternal be,
And live by virtue of his ink ;
For by his verses he doth give
To short-lived beauty aye to live.

Above all others this is he,
Which erst approvèd in his song
That love and honour might agree,
And that pure love will do no wrong.
Sweet saints ! it is no sin or blame,
To love a man of virtuous name.

Did never love so sweetly breathe
In any mortal breast before,
Did never Muse inspire beneath
A Poet's brain with finer store ;
He wrote of love with high conceit,
And beauty rear'd above her height.

RALEIGH.

A Vision upon this Concept of the
Fairy Queen. [1590

METHOUGHT I saw the grave where Laura lay, Spenser.
Within that temple, where the vestal flame
Was wont to burn ; and passing by that way
To see that buried dust of living fame,
Whose tomb fair Love and fairer Virtue kept,
All suddenly I saw the Fairy Queen :
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept,
And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen ;
(For they this Queen attended) ; in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse :
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce :
Where Homer's sprite did tremble all for grief,
And curst the access of that celestial thief.

From Another of the same. [1590

OF me no lines are loved, nor letters are of price, Spenser
(Of all which speak our English tongue), but those
of thy device.

PEELE.

Ad Mæcenatem Prologus. [1593

PLAIN is my coat, and humble is my gait ;
Thrice-noble earl, behold with gentle eyes

My wit's poor worth, even for your noblesse,
Renowned Lord, Northumberland's fair flower,
The Muses' love, patron, and favourite.

* * * * *

And you the Muses, and the Graces three,
You I invoke from heaven and Helicon,
For other patrons have poor poets none,
But Muses and the Graces to implore.
Augustus long ago hath left the world,
And liberal Sidney, famous for the love
He bare to learning and to chivalry,
And virtuous Walsingham are fled to heaven.
Why thither speed not Hobbin and his feres,
Great Hobbinol on whom our shepherds gaze,
And Harington, well-letter'd and discreet,
That hath so purely naturalizèd
Strange words and made them all free denizens?
Why thither speeds not Rosamond's trumpeter,
Sweet as the nightingale? Why go'st not thou,
That richly cloth'st conceit with well-made words,
Campion, accompanied with our English Fraunce,
A peerless, sweet translator of our time?
Why follow not a thousand that I know,
Fellows to these, Apollo's favourites,
And leave behind our ordinary grooms,
With trivial humours to pastime the world,
That favours Pan and Phoebus both alike?
Why thither post not all good wits from hence,
To Chaucer, Gower, and to the fairest Phaer
That ever ventured on great Virgil's works?
To Watson, worthy many epitaphs
For his sweet poesy, for Amyntas' tears
And joys so well set down? And after thee

Why hie they not, unhappy in thine end,
 Marley, the Muses' darling for thy verse,
 Fit to write passions for the souls below,
 If any wretched souls in passion speak?
 Why go not all into th' Elysian fields,
 And leave this centre barren of repast,
 Unless in hope Augusta will restore
 The wrongs that learning bears of covetousness,
 And court's disdain, the enemy to art?
 Leave, foolish lad, it mendeth not with words;
 Nor herbs nor time such remedy affords.

Marlowe.

BRETON.

An Epitaph upon Poet Spenser. [1600

MOURNFUL Muses, sorrow's minions,
 Dwelling in despair's opinions,
 Ye that never thought invented
 How a heart may be contented,
 (But in torments all distress'd,
 Hopeless how to be redress'd,
 All with howling and with crying,
 Live in a continual dying),
 Sing a dirge on Spenser's death,
 Till your souls be out of breath.

Bid the dunces keep their dens,
 And the poets break their pens;
 Bid the shepherds shed their tears,
 And the nymphs go tear their hairs;

Bid the scholars leave their reading,
 And prepare their hearts to bleeding ;
 Bid the valiant and the wise
 Full of sorrows fill their eyes,
 All for grief that he is gone,
 Who did grace them every one.

Fairy Queen show fairest Queen
 How her fair in thee is seen ;
Shepherd's Calender set down
 How to figure best a clown.
 As for *Mother Hubberts Tale*,
 Crack the nut and leave the shale ;
 And for other works of worth
 (All too good to wander forth),
 Grieve that ever you were wrote,
 And your author be forgot.

Farewell *Art of Poetry*,
 Scorning idle foolery !
 Farewell true conceited reason,
 Where was never thought of treason !
 Farewell judgment, with invention
 To describe a heart's intention !
 Farewell wit, whose sound and sense
 Show a poet's excellence !
 Farewell all in one together,
 And with Spenser's garland wither !

And if any Graces live
 That will virtue honour give,
 Let them show their true affection
 In the depth of grief's perfection,

In describing forth her glory
 When she is most deeply sorry,
 That they all may wish to hear
 Such a song and such a quier,
 As with all the woes they have
 Follow Spenser to his grave.

BARNFIELD.

To his Friend, Master R. I. In praise of
 Music and Poetry. [1598

IF Music and sweet Poetry agree,
 As they must needs (the sister and the brother),
 Then must the love be great 'twixt thee and me,
 Because thou lov'st the one, and I the other.
 Dowland to thee is dear ; whose heavenly touch
 Upon the lute, doth ravish human sense :
 Spenser to me ; whose deep conceit is such, Spenser
 As passing all conceit, needs no defence.
 Thou lov'st to hear the sweet melodious sound
 That Phœbus' lute (the queen of music) makes :
 And I in deep delight am chiefly drown'd,
 Whenas himself to singing he betakes.
 One god is god of both (as poets feign),
 One knight loves both, and both in thee
 remain.

[1598]

A Remembrance of some English Poets.

LIVE Spenser ever, in thy *Fairy Queen* :
 Whose like (for deep conceit) was never seen.
 Crown'd mayst thou be, unto thy more renown,
 (As king of poets) with a laurel crown.

And Daniel, praised for thy sweet-chaste verse :
 Whose fame is graved on Rosamond's black hearse.
 Still mayst thou live ; and still be honoured,
 For that rare work, *The White Rose and the Red*.

And Drayton, whose well-written tragedies,
 And sweet Epistles, soar thy fame to skies.
 Thy learned name is equal with the rest ;
 Whose stately numbers are so well address'd.

And Shakespeare, thou, whose honey-flowing vein
 (Pleasing the world) thy praises doth obtain.
 Whose Venus, and whose Luctece (sweet and
 chaste),
 Thy name in fame's immortal book have placed.
 Live ever you, at least in fame live ever :
 Well may the body die, but fame dies never.

BROWNE.

From Britannia's Pastorals. [1613]

HAD Colin Clout yet lived (but he is gone),
 That best on earth could tune a lover's moan,
 Whose sadder tones enforced the rocks to weep,
 And laid the greatest griefs in quiet sleep :

Who when he sung, (as I would do to mine),
 His truest loves to his fair Rosaline,
 Enticed each shepherd's ear to hear him play,
 And rapt with wonder, thus admiring say :
 Thrice happy plains (if plains thrice happy may be)
 Where such a shepherd pipes to such a lady.
 Who made the lasses long to sit down near him ;
 And woo'd the rivers from their springs to hear him.
 Heaven rest thy soul (if so a swain may pray),
 And as thy works live here, live there for aye.

ALL their pipes were still,
 And Colin Clout began to tune his quill Spenser.
 With such deep art, that every one was given :
 To think Apollo (newly slid from heaven)
 Had ta'en a human shape to win his love,
 Or with the western swains for glory strove.
 He sung the heroic knights of fairy land
 In lines so elegant, of such command,
 That had the Thracian play'd but half so well,
 He had not left Eurydice in hell.

ERE their arrival, Astrophel had done Sidney
 His shepherd's lay, yet equalized of none.
 The admired mirror, glory of our isle,
 Thou far far more than mortal man, whose stile
 Struck more men dumb to hearken to thy song,
 Than Orpheus' harp, or Tully's golden tongue.
 To him (as right) for wit's deep quintessence,
 For honour, valour, virtue, excellence,
 Be all the garlands, crown his tomb with bay,

Who spake as much as e'er our tongue can say.

* * * * *

Then in a strain beyond an oaten quill
The learned shepherd of fair Hitching Hill
Sung the heroic deeds of Greece and Troy,
In lines so worthy life, that I employ
My reed in vain to overtake his fame.
All praiseful tongues do wait upon that name.

Our second Ovid, the most pleasing Muse
That heaven did e'er in mortal's brain infuse,
All-lovèd Drayton, in soul-raping strains,
A genuine note, of all the nymphish trains
Began to tune ; on it all ears were hung
As sometime Dido's on Æneas' tongue.

Jonson, whose full of merit to rehearse
Too copious is to be confined in verse ;
Yet therein only fittest to be known,
Could any write a line which he might own.
One, so judicious ; so well-knowing ; and
A man whose least worth is to understand ;
One so exact in all he doth prefer
To able censure ; for the theatre
Not Seneca transcends his worth of praise ;
Who writes him well shall well deserve the bay

Well-lingued Daniel
Davies and Wither, by whose Muses' power
A natural day to me seems but an hour,
And could I ever hear their learned lays,
Ages would turn to artificial days.

DRAYTON.

To William Browne. [1616

DRIVE forth thy flock, young pastor, to that plain,
Where our old shepherds wont their flocks to feed ;
To those clear walks, where many a skilful swain,
Towards the calm evening, tuned his pleasant reed.
Those, to the Muses once so sacred, downs,
As no rude foot might there presume to stand :
(Now made the way of the unworthiest clowns,
Digg'd and plough'd up with each unhallow'd
hand,)

If possible thou canst, redeem those places,
Where, by the brim of many a silver spring,
The learned Maidens and delightful Graces :
Often have sate to hear our shepherds sing :
Where on ~~those~~ pines the neighbouring groves
among

(Now utterly ~~neglected~~ in these days),
Our garlands, ~~pipes~~, and cornamutes were hung,
The monuments of our deserved praise.
So may thy ~~sheep~~ like, so thy lambs increase,
And from the ~~wolf~~ feed ever safe and free !
So mayst thou thrive, among the learned press,
As thou, young shepherd, art beloved of me !

[p. 1627
To My most dearly-loved friend, Henry
Reynolds, Esquire, of Poets and Poesie.

My dearly-lovèd friend, how oft have we
In winter evenings (meaning to be free)
To some well-chosen place used to retire,

And there with moderate meat and wine and fire
 Have pass'd the hours contentedly with chat ;
 Now talk't of this, and then discoursed of that ;
 Spoke our own verses 'twixt ourselves, if not,
 Other men's lines which we by chance had got,
 Or some stage pieces famous long before
 Of which your happy memory had store ;
 And I remember you much pleasèd were
 Of those who livèd long ago to hear,
 As well as of those of these latter times
 Who have enrich'd our language with their rimes,
 And in succession how still up they grew ;
 Which is the subject that I now pursue.
 For from my cradle you must know that I
 Was still inclined to noble poesie ;
 And when that once *Pueriles* I had read,
 And newly had my Cato construed,
 In my small self I greatly marvell'd then
 Amongst all others what strange kind of men
 These poets were ; and pleasèd with the name
 To my mild tutor merrily I came,
 (For I was then a proper goodly page,
 Much like a pigmy, scarce ten years of age,)
 Clasp'g my slender arms about his thigh ;
 " O my dear master, cannot you " (quoth I)
 Make me a poet ? do it, if you can,
 And you shall see I'll quickly be a man."
 Who me thus answer'd smiling : " Boy," quoth
 he,
 " If you'll not play the wag, but I may see
 You ply your learning, I will shortly read
 Some poets to you." Phœbus be my speed !
 To't hard went I, when shortly he began,

And first read to me honest *Mantuan*,
 Then *Virgil's Eglogues*. Being enter'd thus,
 Methought I straight had mounted Pegasus,
 And in his full career could make him stop
 And bound upon Parnassus' bi-clift top.
 I scorn'd your ballad then, though it were done
 And had for finis *William Elderton*.

But soft ; in sporting with this childish jest,
 I from my subject have too long digrest ;
 Then to the matter that we took in hand—
 Jove and Apollo for the Muses stand !

That noble Chaucer in those former times
 The first enrich'd our English with his rimes,
 And was the first of ours that ever brake
 Into the Muses' treasure, and first spake
 In weighty numbers, delving in the mine
 Of perfect knowledge, which he could refine
 And coin for current ; and as much as then
 The English language could express to men,
 He made it do, and by his wondrous skill
 Gave us much light from his abundant quill.

Chaucer.

And honest Gower, who, in respect of him,
 Had only sipt at Aganippa's brim,
 And though in years this last was him before,
 Yet fell he far short of the other's store.
 When after those, four ages very near,
 They with the Muses which conversèd, were
 That princely Surrey, early in the time
 Of the Eight Henry, who was then the prime
 Of England's noble youth : with him there came
 Wyatt, with reverence whom we still do name
 Amongst our poets : Brian had a share
 With the two former, which accompted are

• Gower.

Surrey

Wyatt.

Brian.

That time's best makers, and the authors were
 Of those small poems which the title bear
 Of songs and sonnets, wherein oft they hit
 On many dainty passages of wit.

Gascoigne
 and
 Churchyard.

Gascoigne and Churchyard after them again,
 In the beginning of Eliza's reign,
 Accompted were great meterers many a day,
 But not inspired with brave fire : had they
 Lived but a little longer, they had seen
 Their works before them to have buried been.

Spenser.

Grave moral Spenser after these came on,
 Than whom I am persuaded there was none,
 Since the blind bard his Iliads up did make,
 Fitter a task like that to undertake ;
 To set down boldly, bravely to invent,
 In all high knowledge surely excellent.

Sidney.

The noble Sidney with this last arose,
 That heroë for numbers and for prose ;
 That throughly paced our language as to show
 The plenteous English hand in hand might go
 With Greek and Latin ; and did first reduce
 Our tongue from Lilly's writing then in use,
 Talking of stones, stars, plants, of fishes, flies,
 Playing with words and idle similies ;
 As the English apes and very zanies be
 Of everything that they do hear and see,
 So imitating his ridiculous tricks
 They spake and writ all like mere lunatics.

Warner.

Then Warner, though his lines were not so
 trimm'd,
 Nor yet his poem so exactly limb'd
 And neatly jointed but the critic may
 Easily reprove him, yet thus let me say

For my old friend : some passages there be
In him, which, I protest, have taken me
With almost wonder ; so fine, clear, and new,
As yet they have been equalled by few.

Next Marlowe, bathèd in the Thespian springs, Marlowe.
Had in him those brave translunary things
That the first poets had ; his raptures were
All air and fire, which made his verses clear ;
For that fine madness still he did retain
Which rightly should possess a poet's brain.

And surely Nash, though he a proser were, Nash.
A branch of laurel yet deserves to bear ;
Sharply satiric was he, and that way
He went, that since his being to this day
Few have attempted ; and I surely think
Those words shall hardly be set down with ink
Should scorch and blast so as his could where he
Would inflict vengeance. And be it said of thee, Shake-
Shakespeare, thou had'st as smooth a comic vein, speare.
Fitting the sock, and in thy natural brain
As strong conception and as clear a rage
As any one that traffick'd with the stage.

Amongst these Samuel Daniel, whom if I Daniel.
May speak of, but to *censure* do deny,
Only have heard some wise men him rehearse,
To be too much historian in verse :
His rimes were smooth, his metres well did close,
But yet his manner better fitted prose.
Next these, learn'd Jonson in this list I bring, Jonson.
Who had drunk deep of the Pierian spring,
Whose knowledge did him worthily prefer,
And long was lord here of the theater :
Who in opinion made our learn'd to stick

Whether in poems rightly dramatic
 Strong Seneca or Plautus, he or they,
 Should bear the buskin and the sock away.
 Others again here livèd in my days
 That have of us deservèd no less praise
 For their translations than the daintiest wit
 That on Parnassus thinks he highest doth sit.
 And for a chair may 'mongst the Muses call
 As the most curious maker of them all :

Chapman.

As reverent Chapman, who hath brought to us
 Musæus, Homer, and Herodotus
 Out of the Greek, and by his skill hath rear'd
 Them to that height and to our tongue endear'd
 That, were those poets at this day alive
 To see their books thus with us to survive,
 They would think, having neglected them so long,
 They had bin written in the English tongue.

Silve ter.

And Silvester, who from the French more weak
 Made Bartas of his six days' labour speak
 In natural English, who, had he there stay'd
 He had done well, and never had bewray'd
 His own invention to have bin so poor,
 Who still wrote less in striving to write more.

Sands

Then dainty Sands, that hath to English done
 Smooth-sliding Ovid, and hath made him run
 With so much sweetness and unusual grace,
 As though the neatness of the English pace
 Should tell the jetting Latin that it came
 But slowly after, as though stiff and lame.

Alexander.

So Scotland sent us hither for our own
 That man whose name I ever would have known
 To stand by mine, that most ingenious knight,
 My Alexander, to whom in his right

I want extremely, yet in speaking thus
I do but show the love that was 'twixt us,
And not his numbers, which were brave and high,
So like his mind was his clear poesie.

And my dear Drummond, to whom much I owe
For his much love, and proud I was to know
His poesie : for which two worthy men

Drummond.

I Menstry still shall love, and Hawthornden.

Then the two Beaumonts and my Browne arose,

Beaumont,
Sir J. Beaumont and
Browne.

My dear companions whom I freely chose

My bosom friends, and in their several ways

Rightly born poets, and in these last days

Men of much note and no less nobler parts,

Such as have freely told to me their hearts

As I have mine to them. But if you shall

Say in your knowledge that these be not all

Have writ in numbers, be inform'd that I

Only myself to these few men do tie

Whose works oft printed; set on every post,

To public censure subject have been most.

To such whose poems, be they ne'er so rare,

In private chambers that incloister'd are,

And by transcription daintily must go,

As though the world unworthy were to know

Their rich composures, let those men that keep

These wondrous relics in their judgments deep,

And cry them up so, let such pieces be

Spoke of by those that shall come after me ;

I hope not for them : nor do mean to run

In quest of these that them applause have won

Upon our stages in these latter days,

That are so many ; let them have their bays

That do deserve it ; let those wits that haunt

Those public circuits, let them freely chaunt
 Their fine composures, and their praise pursue.
 And so, my dear friend, for this time adieu.

THOS. HEYWOOD.

From The Hierarchie of the Blessed

Angels.

[1635

OUR modern poets to that pass are driven,
 Those names are curtal'd which they first had
 given ;

And, as we wish to have their memories drown'd,
 We scarcely can afford them half their sound.

Greene.

Greene, who had in both Academies ta'en
 Degree of Master, yet could never gain
 To be call'd more than *Robin* : who, had he
 Profest ought save the Muse, served, and been free
 After a seven years' prenticeship, might have
 (With credit too) gone *Robert* to his grave.

Marlowe.

Marlow, renown'd for his rare art and wit,
 Could ne'er attain beyond the name of *Kil* ;
 Although his *Hero* and *Leander* did

Kyd.

Merit addition rather. Famous *Kyd*

Watson.

Was call'd but *Tom*. *Tom*, Watson, tho' he
 wrote

Able to make *Apollo's* self to dote
 Upon his Muse ; for all that he could strive,
 Yet never could to his full name arrive.

Nash.

Tom, Nash (in his time of no small esteem)
 Could not a second syllable redeem.

Beaumont.

Excellent Beaumont, in the foremost rank

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Of the rarest wits, was never more than <i>Frank</i> . | |
| Mellifluous Shakespeare, whose enchanting quill | Shake- |
| Commanded mirth or passion, was but <i>Will</i> . | speare. |
| And famous Jonson, though his learned pen | Jonson. |
| Be dipt in Castaly, is still but <i>Ben</i> . | |
| Fletcher and Webster, of that learned pack | Fletcher and |
| None of the mean'st, yet neither was but <i>Jack</i> . | Webster. |
| Decker's but <i>Tom</i> ; nor May, nor Middleton. | Dekker. |
| And he's now but <i>Jack</i> Ford, that once were John. | Ford. |

JOHN DAVIES OF HEREFORD.

To our English Terence, Mr. Will.
Shakespeare.

SOME say, good Will, which I, in sport, do sing,
Had'st thou not play'd some kingly parts in
sport,
Thou had'st been a companion for a king ;
And been a king among the meaner sort.
Some others rail ; but, rail as they think fit,
Thou hast no railing, but an honest wit :
And honesty thou sow'st, which they do reap ;
So, to increase their stock which they do keep.

BEAUMONT.

Letter to Ben Jonson.

THE sun (which doth the greatest comfort bring
To absent friends, because the self-same thing

They know they see, however absent,) is
 Here our best hay-maker (forgive me this ;
 It is our country's style) : in this warm shine
 I lie, and dream of your full Mermaid wine.

* * * * *

What things have we seen
 Done at the Mermaid ! heard words that have
 been

So nimble, and so full of subtle flame,
 As if that every one from whom they came
 Had meant to put his whole wit in a jest,
 And had resolved to live a fool the rest
 Of his dull life ; then where there hath been
 thrown

Wit able enough to justify the town
 For three days past : wit that might warrant be
 For the whole city to talk foolishly,
 Till that were cancell'd ; and when that was gone,
 We left an air behind us, which alone
 Was able to make the two next companies
 Right witty ; though but downright fools, mere
 wise.

* * * * *

Fate once again
 Bring me to thee, who canst make smooth and
 plain

The way of knowledge for me, and then I,
 Who have no good but in thy company,
 Protest it will my greatest comfort be
 To acknowledge all I have to flow from thee.
 Ben, when these scenes are perfect we'll taste
 wine ;
 I'll drink thy Muse's health, thou shalt quaff mine.

From Verses to My dear friend
Master Ben Jonson, upon his Fox.

I WOULD have shown,
To all the world, the art, which thou alone
Hast taught our tongue, the rules of time, of place,
And other rites, deliver'd with the grace
Of comic style, which only, is far more
Than any English stage hath known before.

To my friend Mr. John Fletcher upon his
Faithful Shepherdess. [1610

I KNOW too well, that, no more than the man
That travels through the burning deserts, can,
When he is beaten with the raging sun,
Half smother'd with the dust, have power to run
From a cool river, which himself doth find,
Ere he be slaked ; no more can he, whose mind
Joys in the Muses, hold from that delight,
When Nature and his full thoughts bid him write.
Yet wish I those, whom I for friends have known,
To sing their thoughts to no ears but their own.
Why should the man, whose wit ne'er had a stain,
Upon the public stage present his vein,
And make a thousand men in judgment sit,
To call in question his undoubted wit,
Scarce two of which can understand the laws
Which they should judge by, nor the party's cause ?
Among the rout, there is not one that hath
In his own censure an explicit faith ;
One company, knowing they judgment lack,
Ground their belief on the next man in black ;

Others, on him that makes signs, and is mute ;
Some like, as he does in the fairest suit ;
He, as his mistress doth ; and she, by chance ;
Nor want there those, who, as the boy doth dance
Between the acts, will censure the whole play ;
Some like if the wax-lights be new that day ;
But multitudes there are, whose judgment goes
Headlong according to the actors' clothes.
For this, these public things and I agree
So ill, that, but to do a right to thee,
I had not been persuaded to have hurl'd
These few ill-spoken lines into the world ;
Both to be read and censured of by those
Whose very reading makes verse senseless prose ;
Such as must spend above an hour to spell
A challenge on a post, to know it well.
But since it was thy hap to throw away
Much wit, for which the people did not pay,
Because they saw it not, I not dislike
This second publication, which may strike
Their consciences, to see the things they scorn'd,
To be with so much wit and art adorn'd.
Besides, one vantage more in this I see,
Your censurers must have the quality
Of reading, which I am afraid is more
Than half your shrewdest judges had before.

FLETCHER.

To Beaumont on his Poems. [1610

THE matchless lust of a fair poesy,
Which was erst buried in old Rome's decays,

Now 'gins with heat of rising majesty,
Her dust-wrapt head from rotten tomb to raise,
And with fresh splendour gilds her fearless crest,
Rearing her palace in our poet's breast.

The wanton Ovid, whose enticing rimes
Have with attractive wonder forced attention,
No more shall be admired at ; for these times
Produce a poet, whose more rare invention
Will tear the love-sick myrtle from his brows,
To adorn his temples with deserved boughs.

The strongest marble fears the smallest rain ;
The rusting canker eats the purest gold.
Honour's best dye dreads envy's blackest stain ;
The crimson badge of beauty must wax old :
But this fair issue of thy fruitful brain,
Nor dreads age, envy, cankering rust, or rain.

To Ben Jonson on Volpone.

FORGIVE thy friends ; they would, but cannot
praise
Enough the wit, art, language of thy plays ;
Forgive thy foes ; they will not praise thee. Why ?
Thy fate hath thought it best they should envÿ.
Faith, for thy Fox's sake, forgive then those
Who are not worthy to be friends, nor foes.
Or, for their own brave sake, let them be still
Fools at thy mercy, and like what they will.

*From Verses to my worthy friend,
Ben Jonson, on his Catiline.*

BUT, O thou happy man, that must not die,
As these things shall ; leaving no more behind
But a thin memory, like a passing wind
That blows, and is forgotten, ere they are cold.
Thy labours shall outlive thee ; and, like gold
Stamp't for continuance, shall be current, where
There is a sun, a people, or a year.

CHAPMAN.

[1600

From Hero and Leander. Book III.

THEN, ho ! most strangely intellectual fire
That, proper to my soul, hast power to inspire
Her burning faculties, and with the wings
Of thy unspherèd flame visit'st the springs
Of spirits immortal, now (as swift as Time
Doth follow motion) find the eternal clime
Of his free soul whose living subject stood
Up to the chin in the Pierian flood.

Marlowe.

*To his loving friend, Mr. John Fletcher,
concerning his Pastoral being both a
Poem and a Play.*

[1610

THERE are no sureties, good friend, will be taken
For works that vulgar good-name hath forsaken.
A poem and a play too ! Why, 'tis like
A scholar that 's a poet : their names strike

Their pestilence inward, when they take the air,
 And kill outright ; one cannot both fates bear.
 But, as a poet that 's no scholar makes
 Vulgarly his whiffler, and so takes
 Passage with ease and state through both sides
 preas

Of pageant seers : or as scholars please
 That are no poets, more than poets learn'd,
 (Since their art solely is by souls discern'd ;
 The others' falls within the common sense,
 And sheds, like common light, her influence :)
 So were your play no poem, but a thing
 That every cobbler to his patch might sing,
 A rout of niffes, like the multitude,
 With no one limb of any art endued ;
 Like would to like, and praise you. But, because
 Your poem only hath by us applause,
 Renews the golden world, and holds through all
 The holy laws of homely pastoral,
 Where flowers and founts, and nymphs and semi-
 gods,
 And all the graces find their old abodes ;
 Where forests flourish but in endless verse,
 And meadows nothing fit for purchasers :
 This iron age, that eats itself, will never
 Bite at your golden world, that others ever
 Loved as itself. Then, like your book, do you
 Live in old peace, and that for praise allow.

From Verses on Sejanus. [1605

FOR though thy hand was scarce address to draw Jonson.
 The semicircle of Sejanus' life,

Thy muse yet makes it the whole sphere, and law
 To all state-lives, and bounds ambition's strife ;
 And as a little brook creeps from his spring,
 With shallow tremblings, through the lowest
 vales,
 As if he fear'd his stream abroad to bring
 Lest profane feet should wrong it, and rude
 gales ;
 But finding happy channels, and supplies
 Of other fords mixt with his modest course,
 He grows a goodly river, and describes
 The strength that mann'd him, since he left his
 source ;
 Then takes he in delightsome meads and groves,
 And, with his two-edged waters, flourishes
 Before great palaces, and all men's loves
 Build by his shores, to greet his passages :
 So thy chaste muse, by virtuous self-mistrust,
 Which is a true mark' of the truest merit ;
 In virgin fear of men's illiterate lust,
 Shut her soft wings, and durst not shew her
 spirit ;
 Till nobly cherish'd, now thou let'st her fly,
 Singing the sable Orgies of the Muses,
 And in the highest pitch of Tragedy,
 Mak'st her command, all things thy ground
 produces.

BASSE.

[1616?

Spenser.

RENOWNED Spenser, lie a thought more nigh

Chaucer.

To learned Chaucer ; and rare Beaumont, lie

A little nearer Spenser ; to make room
 For Shakespeare in your three-fold four-fold tomb :
 To lodge all four in one bed make a shift
 Until Doomsday ; for hardly will a fift,
 Betwixt this day and that, by fate be slain,
 For whom your curtains may be drawn again.
 But if precedency in death doth bar
 A fourth place in your sacred sepulchre,
 Under this carvèd marble of thine own,
 Sleep, rare tragedian, Shakespeare, sleep alone :
 Thy unmolested peace, unsharèd cave,
 Possess as lord, not tenant, of thy grave ;
 That unto us and others it may be
 Honour hereafter to be laid by thee.

Beaumont.
 Shake-
 speare.

BEN JONSON.

To Elizabeth, Countess of Rutland.

THAT poets are far rarer births than kings,
 Your noblest father proved ; like whom, before,
 Or then, or since, about our Muses' springs,
 Came not that soul exhausted so their store.
 Hence was it that the Destinies decreed
 (Save that most masculine issue of his brain)
 No male unto him ; who could so exceed
 Nature, they thought, in all that he would feign.
 At which, she happily displeased, made you :
 On whom, if he were living now to look,
 He should those rare and absolute numbers view,
 As he would burn, or better far his book.

Sidney.

From Epistle to Eliz., Countess of Rutland.

NOR with tickling rimes,
 Or common-places, filch'd, that take these times,
 But high and noble matter, such as flies
 From brains entranced, and filled with extasies ;
 Moods which the god-like Sidney oft did prove.

Sidney.

From To Penshurst.

That taller tree, which of a nut was set
 At his great birth, where all the Muses met.

Sidney

From An Ode.

Hath our great Sidney, Stella set
 Where never star shone brighter yet ?
 Or Constable's ambrosiac muse
 Made Dian not his notes refuse ?

Sidney.

Constable

To Francis Beaumont.

How I do love thee, Beaumont, and thy Muse,
 That unto me dost such religion use !
 How I do fear myself, that am not worth
 The least indulgent thought thy pen drops forth !
 At once thou mak'st me happy and unmak'st ;
 And giving largely to me more thou tak'st !
 What fate is mine, that so itself bereaves ?
 What art is thine, that so thy friend deceives ?
 When even there, where most thou praisest me,
 For writing better, I must envy thee.

To my worthy Author Mr. John Fletcher
upon his Faithful Shepherdess. [1610

THE wise and many-headed bench, that sits
Upon the life and death of plays and wits,
(Composed of gamester, captain, knight, knight's
man,

Lady or pucelle, that wears mask or fan,
Velvet, or taffeta cap, rank'd in the dark
With the shop's foreman, or some such brave spark
That may judge for his sixpence) had, before
They saw it half, damn'd thy whole play, and
more ;

Their motives were, since it had not to do
With vices, which they look'd for, and came to.
I, that am glad thy innocence was thy guilt,
And wish that all the Muses' blood were spilt
In such a martyrdom, to vex their eyes,
Do crown thy murder'd poem : which shall rise
A glorified work to time, when fire,
Or moths shall eat what all these fools admire.

To my worthy and honoured friend
Master George Chapman. [1618

WHOSE work could this be, Chapman, to refine
Old Hesiod's ore, and give it thus ! but thine,
Who had'st before wrought in rich Homer's mine.

What treasure hast thou brought us ! and what
store

Still, still, dost thou arrive with at our shore,
To make thy honour, and our wealth the more !

If all the vulgar tongues that speak this day
 Were ask'd of thy discoveries ; they must say,
 To the Greek coast thine only knew the way.

Such passage hast thou found, such returns made,
 As now of all men, it is call'd thy trade,
 And who make thither else, rob or invade.

To John Donne. [1616

DONNE, the delight of Phœbus and each Muse,
 Who, to thy one, all other brains refuse ;
 Whose every work of thy most early wit
 Came forth example, and remains so yet :
 Longer a-knowing than most wits do live,
 And which no affection praise enough can give !
 To it, thy language, letters, arts, best life,
 Which might with half mankind maintain a strife ;
 All which I meant to praise, and yet I would ;
 But leave, because I cannot as I should !

To John Donne.

WHO shall doubt, Donne, whêr I a poet be,
 When I dare send my Epigrams to thee ?
 That so alone canst judge, so alone dost make :
 And in thy censures, evenly, dost take
 As free simplicity to disavow,
 As thou hast best authority to allow.
 Read all I send ; and if I find but one
 Mark'd by thy hand, and with the better stone,
 My title's seal'd. Those that for claps do write,
 Let pui'nees, porters, players' praise delight,
 And till they burst their backs, like asses load :
 A man should seek great glory, and not broad.

To the Memory of my Beloved Master
 . William Shakespeare, and what he
 hath left us. [1623

To draw no envy, Shakespeare, on thy name,
 Am I thus ample to thy book and fame ;
 While I confess thy writings to be such,
 As neither man, nor Muse, can praise too much.
 'Tis true, and all men's suffrage. But these ways
 Were not the paths I meant unto thy praise ;
 For silliest ignorance on these may light,
 Which when it sounds at best, but echoes right ;
 Or blind affection, which doth ne'er advance
 The truth, but gropes, and urgeth all by chance ;
 Or crafty malice might pretend this praise,
 And think to ruin, where it seem'd to raise. :
 But thou art proof against them, and, indeed,
 Above the ill fortune of them, or the need.
 I therefore will begin : Soul of the age !
 The applause ! delight ! the wonder of our stage !
 My Shakespeare rise ! I will not lodge thee by
 Chaucer, or Spenser, or bid Beaumont lie
 A little further off, to make thee room :
 Thou art a monument without a tomb,
 And art alive still, while thy book doth live
 And we have wits to read, and praise to give.
 That I not mix thee so, my brain excuses,
 I mean with great, but disproportion'd Muses :
 For if I thought my judgment were of years,
 I should commit thee surely with thy peers,
 And tell how far thou didst our Lily outshine,
 Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line.
 And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,

Chaucer,
 Spenser,
 Beaumont.

Lily,
 Kyd,
 Marlowe.

From thence to honour thee, I would not seek
For names : but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,
Euripides and Sophocles to us,
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova, dead,
To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage ; or when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for the comparison
Of all, that insolent Greece, or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph my Britain, thou hast one to show,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time !
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm !
Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines !
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please ;
But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.
Yet must I not give nature all ; thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
For though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion ; and, that he
Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
Such as thine are, and strike the second heat
Upon the Muses' anvil ; turn the same,
And himself with it, that he thinks to frame ;
Or for the laurel, he may gain a scorn ;
For a good poet's made as well as born.

And such wert thou ! Look how the father's face
 Lives in his issue, even so the race
 Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
 In his well turned and true filèd lines :
 In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
 As brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.
 Sweet Swan of Avon ! what a sight it were
 To see thee in our water yet appear,
 And make those flights upon the banks of Thames,
 That so did take Eliza, and our James !
 But stay, I see thee in the hemisphere
 Advanced, and made a constellation there !
 Shine forth, thou Star of Poets, and with rage,
 Or influence, chide or cheer the drooping stage,
 Which since thy flight from hence, hath mourn'd
 like night,
 And despairs day, but for thy volume's light.

On the Portrait of Shakespeare. [1623
 To the Reader.

THIS figure that thou here seest put,
 It was for gentle Shakespeare cut,
 Wherein the graver had a strife
 With nature to out-do the life :
 O could he but have drawn his wit
 As well in brass, as he has hit
 His face ; the print would then surpass
 All that was ever writ in brass :
 But since he cannot, reader, look
 Not on his picture but his book.

A Vision on the Muses of his Friend

Michael Drayton. [1627

It hath been question'd, Michael, if I be
A friend at all ; or, if at all, to thee :
Because, who made the question, have not seen
Those ambling visits pass in verse, between
Thy Muse and mine, as they expect : 'tis true,
You have not writ to me, nor I to you.
And though I now begin, 'tis not to rub
Haunch against haunch, or raise a riming club
About the town ; this reckoning I will pay
Without conferring symbols ; this, my day.

It was no dream ! I was awake and saw.
Lend me the voice, O Fame, that I may draw
Wonder to truth, and have my vision hurl'd
Hot from thy trumpet round about the world.
I saw a beauty from the sea to rise,
That all earth look'd on, and that earth all eyes !
It cast a beam, as when the cheerful sun
Is fair got up, and day some hours begun ;
And fill'd an orb as circular as heaven :
The orb was cut forth into regions seven,
And those so sweet, and well-proportion'd parts,
As it had been the circle of the arts :
When by thy bright Idea standing by,
I found it pure and perfect poesy.
There read I, straight, thy learned Legends three,
Heard the soft airs, between our swains and thee,
Which made me think the old Theocritus,
Or rural Virgil come to pipe to us.
But then thy Epistolar Heroic Songs,
Their loves, their quarrels, jealousies and wrongs,

Did all so strike me, as I cried, who can
With us be called the Naso, but this man ?
And looking up, I saw Minerva's fowl,
Perch'd over head, the wise Athenian Owl :
I thought thee then our Orpheus, that would'st try,
Like him, to make the air one volary.
And I had styled thee Orpheus, but before
My lips could form the voice, I heard that roar,
And rouze, the marching of a mighty force,
Drums against drums, the neighing of the horse,
The fights, the cries, and wondering at the jars,
I saw and read it was the Barons' Wars.
O how in those dost thou instruct these times,
That rebels' actions are but valiant crimes ;
And carried, though with shout and noise, confess
A wild, and an unauthorized wickedness !
Say'st thou so, Lucan ? but thou scorn'st to stay
Under one title : thou hast made thy way
And flight about the isle, well near, by this
In the admired Periegesis,
Or universal circumduction
Of all that read thy Poly-Olbion ;
That read it ! that are ravish'd ; such was I,
With every song, I swear, and so would die ;
But that I hear again thy drum to beat
A better cause, and strike the bravest heat
That ever yet did fire the English blood,
Our right in France, if rightly understood.
There thou art Homer ; pray thee, use the style
Thou hast deserved, and let me read the while
Thy catalogue of ships, exceeding his,
Thy list of aids and force, for so it is ;
The poet's act ; and for his country's sake,

Brave are the musters that the Muse will make.
And when he ships them, where to use their arms,
How do his trumpets breathe ! what loud alarms !
Look how we read the Spartans were inflamed
With bold Tyrtæus' verse ; when thou art named,
So shall our English youth urge on, and cry
An Agincourt ! an Agincourt ! or die.
This book it is a catechism to fight,
And will be bought of every lord and knight
That can but read ; who cannot, may in prose
Get broken pieces, and fight well by those.
The miseries of Margaret the queen,
Of tender eyes will more be wept than seen.
I feel it by mine own, that overflow
And stop my sight in every line I go.
But then, refreshed by thy Fairy Court,
I look on Cynthia, and Syrena's sport,
As on two flowery carpets, that did rise,
And with their grassy green restored mine eyes.
Yet give me leave to wonder at the birth
Of thy strange Moon-calf, both thy strain of mirth,
And gossip-got acquaintance, as to us
Thou had'st brought Lapland, or old Cobalus,
Empusa, Lamia, or some monster more
Than Afric knew, or the full Grecian store.
I gratulate it to thee, and thy ends,
To all thy virtuous and well-chosen friends ;
Only my loss is, that I am not there,
And till I worthy am to wish I were,
I call the world that envies me, to see
If I can be a friend, and friend to thee.

An Ode to Himself.

WHERE dost thou careless lie
Buried in ease and sloth ?
Knowledge, that sleeps, doth die ;
And this security,
It is the common moth
That eats on wits and arts, and so destroys them
both.

Are all the Aonian springs
Dried up ? lies Thespia waste ?
Doth Clarius' harp want strings,
That not a nymph now sings ;
Or droop they as disgraced,
To see their seats and bowers by chatting 'pies
defaced ?

If hence thy silence be,
As 'tis too just a cause ;
Let this thought quicken thee :
Minds that are great and free
Should not on fortune pause,
'Tis crown enough to virtue still, her own applause

What though the greedy fry
Be taken with false baits
Of worded balladry,
And think it poesy ?
They die with their conceits,
And only piteous scorn upon their folly waits.

Then take in hand thy lyre,
'Strike in thy proper strain,

With Japhet's line, aspire
Sol's chariot for new fire,
 To give the world again :
Who aided him, will thee, the issue of Jove's brain.

And since our dainty age
 Cannot indure reproof,
Make not thyself a page,
 To that strumpet the stage,
But sing high and aloof,
Safe from the wolf's black jaw, and the dull ass's
 hoof.

Ode to Himself. [c. 1629

 COME leave the loathed stage,
 And the more loathsome age ;
Where pride and impudence, in faction knit,
 Usurp the chair of wit !
Indicting and arraigning every day
 Something they call a play.
 Let their fastidious, vain
 Commission of the brain
Run on and rage, sweat, censure and condemn ;
They were not made for thee, less thou for them.

 Say that thou pourest them wheat,
 And they will acorns eat ;
'Twere simple fury still thyself to waste
 On such as have no taste !
To offer them a surfeit of pure bread,
 Whose appetites are dead !
No, give them grains their fill,
Husks, draff to drink and swill :

If they love lees, and leave the lusty wine,
Envy them not, their palate's with the swine.

No doubt some mouldy tale,
Like Pericles, and stale
As the shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish—
Scraps out of every dish
Thrown forth, and raked into the common tub,
May keep up the Play-club :
There, sweepings do as well
As the best order'd meal ;
For who the relish of these guests will fit,
Needs set them but the alms-basket of wit.

And much good do't you then :
Brave plush and velvet-men
Can feed on orts ; and, safe in your stage-clothes,
Dare quit upon your oaths,
The stagers and the stage-wrights too, your peers,
Of larding your large ears
With their foul comic socks,
Wrought upon twenty blocks ;
Which if they are torn, and turn'd, and patch'd
enough,
The gamesters share your guilt, and you their stuff.

Leave things so prostitute,
And take the Alcaic lute ;
Or thine own Horace, or Anacreon's lyre ;
Warm thee by Pindar's fire :
And though thy nerves be shrunk, and blood be
cold
Ere years have made thee old,

Strike that disdainful heat,
Throughout, to their defeat,
As curious fools, and envious of thy strain,
May, blushing, swear no palsy's in thy brain.

But when they hear thee sing
The glories of thy king,
His zeal to God, and his just awe o'er men :
They may, blood-shaken then,
Feel such a flesh-quake to possess their powers
As they shall cry, " Like ours,
In sound of peace or wars,
No harp e'er hit the stars,
In tuning forth the acts of his sweet reign ;
And raising Charles his chariot 'bove his Wain.'

FORD.

On the best of English Poets, Ben Jonson,
Deceased. [1638

So seems a star to shoot ; when from our sight
Falls the deceit, not from its loss of light ;
We want use of a soul, who merely know
What to our passion, or our sense we owe :
By such a hollow glass, our cozen'd eye
Concludes alike all dead, whom it sees die.
Nature is knowledge here but unrefined,
Both differing, as the body from the mind ;
Laurel and cypress else, had grown together,
And wither'd without memory to either :
Thus undistinguish'd, might in every part
The sons of earth vie with the sons of art.

Forbid it, holy reverence to his name,
Whose glory hath fill'd up the book of fame !

* * * * *

Drawn to the life of every line and limb,
He (in his truth of art, and that in him)
Lives yet, and will, while letters can be read ;
The loss is ours ; now hope of life is dead.
Great men, and worthy of report, must fall
Into their earth, and sleeping there sleep all :
Since he whose pen in every strain did use
To drop a verse, and every verse a muse,
Is vow'd to heaven ; as having with fair glory,
Sung thanks of honour, or some nobler story.
The court, the university, the heat
Of theatres, with what can else beget
Belief, and admiration, clearly prove
Our poet first in merit, as in love :
Yet if he do not at his full appear,
Survey him in his works, and know him there.

PHINEAS FLETCHER

From The Purple Island. 1833

WITNESS our Colin ; whom though all the Graces,
And all the Muses nursed ; whose well-taught song
Parnassus self, and Gloriana embraces
And all the learn'd, and all the shepherds throng ;
Yet all his hopes were cross'd, all suits denied ;
Discouraged, scorn'd, his writings vilified :
Poorly—poor man—he lived ; poorly—poor man—
he died.

Spenser.

QUARLES. [1633

To my dear friend, the Spenser of this Age.

Ph. Fletcher.

DEAR Friend,

No more a stranger now : I lately past
Thy curious Building : call'd ; but then my haste
Denied me a full draught, I did but taste.

Thy wine was rich and pleasing ; did appear
No common grape : my haste could not forbear
A second sip ; I hung a garland there :

Past on my way ; I lash'd through thick and thin,
Despatch'd my business, and return'd again ;
I call'd the second time ; unhorsed, went in :

View'd every room ; each room was beautified
With new invention, carved on every side,
To please the common and the curious eyed ;

View'd every office ; every office lay
Like a rich magazine ; and did bewray
Thy treasure, open'd with thy golden key :

View'd every orchard ; every orchard did
Appear a Paradise whose fruits were hid
—Perchance—with shadowing leaves, but none
forbid :

View'd every plot ; spent some delightful hours :
In every garden, full of new-born flowers,
Delicious banks, and delectable bowers.

Thus having stepp'd and travell'd every stair
 Within, and tasted every fruit that 's rare
 Without ; I made thy house my thorough-fare.

Then give me leave, rare Fletcher,—as before
 I left a garland at thy gates—once more
 To hang this ivy at thy postern door.

SHIRLEY.

A Prologue to the Alchemist. [1637

THE Alchemist, a play for strength of wit,
 And true art, made to shame what hath been writ
 In former ages ; I except no worth
 Of what or Greeks or Latins have brought forth ;
 Is now to be presented to your ear,
 For which I wish each man were a Muse here,
 To know, and in his soul be fit to be
 Judge of this masterpiece of comedy ;
 That when we hear but once of Jonson's name,
 Whose mention shall make proud the breath of
 fame,

Jonson.

We may agree, and crowns of laurel bring
 A justice unto him the poets' king.
 But he is dead : time, envious of that bliss
 Which we possess'd in that great brain of his,
 By putting out this light, hath darken'd all
 The sphere of poesy, and we let fall,
 At best, unworthy elegies on his hearse,
 A tribute that we owe his living verse ;

HERRICK.

*From The Apparition of his Mistress
calling him to Elysium.* [1648

AND here we'll sit on primrose-banks, and see
Love's Chorus led by Cupid ; and we'll be
Two loving followers too unto the grove,
Where Poets sing the stories of our love.

* * * * *

Thou shalt there

Behold them in a spacious theater,
Among which glories (crown'd with sacred bays,
And flattering ivy) Two recite their plays,
Beaumont and Fletcher, Swans, to whom all ears
Listen, while they (like sirens in their spheres)
Sing their Evadnes ; and still more for thee
There yet remains to know, than thou canst see
By glimmering of a fancy ; do but come,
And there I'll show thee that capacious room
In which thy father Jonson now is placed,
As in a globe of radiant fire, and graced
To be in that orb crown'd (that doth include
Those prophets of the former magnitude),
And he one chief.

Beaumont
and
Fletcher.

Jonson.

Upon Master Fletcher's incomparable
Plays. [1648

APOLLO sings, his harp resounds : give room,
For now behold the golden pomp is come,
Thy pomp of plays, which thousands come to see,
With admiration both of them and thee.

O volume worthy, leaf by leaf, and cover,
To be with juice of cedar wash'd all over ;
Here words with lines, and lines with scenes
consent,
To raise an Act to full astonishment ;
Here melting numbers, words of power to move
Young men to swoon and maids to die for love.
Love lies a bleeding here, Evadne there
Swells with brave rage, yet comely everywhere ;
Here 's a *Mad Lover*, there that high design
Of *King and no King* (and the rare plot thine),
So that whene'er we circumvolve our eyes,
Such rich, such fresh, such sweet varieties,
Ravish our spirits, that entranced we see
None writes love's passion in the world, like thee.

His Prayer to Ben Jonson. [1648

WHEN I a verse shall make,
Know I have pray'd thee
For old religion's sake,
Saint Ben to aid me.

Make the way smooth for me,
When I, thy Herrick,
Honouring thee, on my knee
Offer my Lyric.

Candles I'll give to thee,
And a new altar ;
And thou Saint Ben, shalt be
Writ in my psalter.

An Ode for Him.

[1648]

Ah Ben !

Say how, or when
Shall we thy guests
Meet at those lyric feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the triple Tun ?
Where we such clusters had
As made us nobly wild, not mad ;
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.

My Ben !

Or come again :
Or send to us,
Thy wit's great over-plus ;
But teach us yet
Wisely to husband it
Lest we that talent spend,
And having once brought to an end
That precious stock ; the store
Of such a wit the world should have no more.

A Bacchanalian Verse.

FILL me a mighty bowl
Up to the brink :
That I may drink
Unto my Jonson's soul.

Jonson

Crown it agen agen ;
 And thrice repeat
 That happy heat ;
 To drink to thee my Ben.

Well I can quaff I see,
 To th' number five,
 Or nine ; but thrive
 In frenzy ne'er like thee.

Epigram. [1648

Jonson.

THOU had'st the wreath before, now take the tree
 That henceforth none be laurel-crown'd but thee.

Upon Ben Jonson. [1648

HERE lies Jonson with the rest
 Of the Poets ; but the best.
 Reader, would'st thou more have known ?
 Ask his story, not this stone.
 That will speak what this can't tell
 Of his glory. So farewell.

Upon Mr. Ben Jonson. [1648

AFTER the rare arch-poet died,
 The sock grew loathsome, and the buskin's pride
 Together with the stage's glory stood
 Each like a poor and pitied widowhood.
 The Cirque profaned was ; and all postures rackt :
 For men did strut, and stride, and stare, not act.
 Then temper flew from words ; and men did
 squeak,

Look red, and blow, and bluster, but not speak :
No holy rage, or frantic fire did stir,
Or flash about the spacious theater.
No clap of hands, or shout, or praises-proof
Did crack the playhouse sides, or cleave her roof.
Artless the scene was ; and that monstrous sin
Of deep and arrant ignorance came in ;
Such ignorance as theirs was, who once hiss'd
At thy unequall'd play the Alchemist ;
O fie upon 'em ! Lastly too, all wit
In utter darkness did, and still will sit
Sleeping the luckless age out, till that she
Her resurrection has again with thee.

PERIOD III.
POETS OF THE
XVIIITH CENTURY.

MILTON TO OLDHAM.

MILTON.

An Epitaph on the admirable dramatic
poet, W. Shakespeare. [1632

WHAT needs my Shakespeare for his honour'd
bones

The labour of an age in piled stones,
Or that his hallow'd relics should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid ?
Dear son of Memory, great heir of fame,
What need'st thou such weak memory of thy
name ?

Thou, in our wonder and astonishment,
Hast built thyself a live-long monument :
For whilst to the shame of slow-endeavouring art
Thy easy numbers flow ; and that each heart
Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
Those Delphic lines with deep impression took ;
Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,
Dost make us marble with too much conceiving ;
And, so sepulchred, in such pomp dost lie,
That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

From Il Penseroso. [1632-1638

OR call up him that left half-told
The story of Cambuscan bold,

Chaucer.

Of Camball and of Algarsife,
 And who had Canace to wife,
 That own'd the virtuous ring and glass ;
 And of the wondrous horse of brass,
 On which the Tartar kings did ride ;
 And if aught else great bards beside
 In sage and solemn tunes have sung,
 Of turneys and of trophies hung,
 Of forests and enchantments drear,
 Where more is meant than meets the ear.

From L'Allegro. [1632-1638]

Jonson.
 Shake-
 speare.

THEN to the well-trod stage anon,
 If Jonson's learned sock be on,
 Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
 Warble his native wood-notes wild.

UNKNOWN. [1632

On worthy Master Shakespeare and
 his Poems.

A MIND reflecting ages past, whose clear
 And equal surface can make things appear
 Distant a thousand years, and represent
 Them in their lively colours, just extent,
 To out-run hasty Time, retrieve the Fates,
 Roll back the heavens, blow up the iron gates
 Of Death and Lethe, where confusèd lie
 Great heaps of ruinous mortality ;
 In that deep dusky dungeon to discern

A royal ghost from churls ; by art to learn
The physiognomy of shades, and give
Them sudden birth, wondering how oft they
live ;

What story coldly tells, what poets feign
At second-hand, and picture without brain,
Senseless and soul-less shows : to give a stage
(Ample and true with life) voice, action, age,
As Plato's year, a new scene of the world,
Them unto us, or us to them had hurl'd :
To raise our ancient sovereigns from their hearse,
Make kings his subjects ; by exchanging verse
Enlive their pale trunks, that the present age
Joys in their joy, and trembles at their rage :
Yet so to temper passion, that our ears
Take pleasure in their pain, and eyes in tears
Both weep and smile ; fearful at plots so sad,
Then laughing at our fear ; abused and glad
To be abused ; affected with that truth
Which we perceive is false, pleased in that ruth
At which we start, and by elaborate play
Tortured and tickled ; by a crab-like way
Time past made pastime, and in ugly sort
Disgorging up his ravin for our sport :—
While the plebeian imp, from lofty throne,
Creates and rules a world, and works upon
Mankind by secret engines ; now to move
A chilling pity, then a rigorous love ;
To strike up and stroke down both joy and ire ;
To steer the affections ; and by heavenly fire
Mould us anew, stolen from ourselves :—

This, and much more which cannot be express'd
Bat by himself, his tongue, and his own breast,

Was Shakespeare's freehold ; which his cunning
brain

Improved by favour of the nine-fold train ;
The buskin'd Muse, the comic queen, the grand
And louder tone of Clio, nimble hand
And nimbler foot of the melodious pair,
The silver-voicèd lady, the most fair
Calliope, whose speaking silence daunts,
And she whose praise the heavenly body chaunts ;
These jointly woo'd him, envying one another,
(Obey'd by all as spouse, but loved as brother,)
And wrought a curious robe, of sable grave,
Fresh green, and pleasant yellow, red most brave,
And constant blue, rich purple, guiltless white,
The lowly russet and the scarlet bright ;
Branch'd and embroider'd like the painted spring ;
Each leaf match'd with a flower, and each string
Of golden wire, each line of silk ; there run
Italian works, whose thread the sisters spun ;
And there did sing, or seem to sing, the choice
Birds of a foreign note and various voice ;
Here hangs a mossy rock ; there plays a fair
But chiding fountain, purlèd ; not the air,
Nor clouds, nor thunder, but were living drawn,
Not out of common tiffany or lawn,
But fine materials, which the Muses know,
And only know the countries where they grow.

Now, when they could no longer him enjoy
In mortal garments pent,—“Death may destroy”
They say, “his body ; but his verse shall live,
And more than nature takes, our hands shall
give :

In a less volume, but more strongly bound,

Shakespeare shall breathe and speak ; with laurel
crown'd

Which never fades ; fed with ambrosian meat,
In a well-lined vesture, rich and neat."

So with this robe they clothe him, bid him wear it ;
For time shall never stain nor envy tear it.

I. M. S.

WALLER.

From Penshurst. [c. 1636

LOVE's foe profess'd ! why dost thou falsely feign
Thyself a Sidney ? from which noble strain
He sprung, that could so far exalt the name
Of Love, and warm a nation with his flame ;
That all we can of love or high desire
Seems but the smoke of amorous Sidney's fire.

Sidney

On Mr. John Fletcher's Plays.

FLETCHER ! to thee we do not only owe
All these good plays, but those of others too :
Thy wit repeated does support the stage,
Credits the last, and entertains this age,
No worthies form'd by any Muse but thine
Could purchase robes to make themselves so fine.

What brave commander is not proud to see
Thy brave Melantius in his gallantry ?
Our greatest ladies love to see their scorn
Outdone by thine, in what themselves have worn :

The impatient widow, ere the year be done,
Sees thy Aspasia weeping in her gown.

I never yet the tragic train assay'd,
Deterr'd by that inimitable Maid ;
And when I venture at the comic style,
Thy Scornful Lady seems to mock my toil.

Thus has thy Muse at once improved and marr'd
Our sport in plays, by rendering it too hard !
So when a sort of lusty shepherds throw
The bar by turns, and none the rest outgo
So far, but that the best are measuring casts,
Their emulation and their pastime lasts ;
But if some brawny yeoman of the guard
Step in, and toss the axle-tree a yard
Or more beyond the furthest mark, the rest
Despairing stand, their sport is at the best.

[1645 ?

From Prologue to the Maid's Tragedy.

SCARCE should we have the boldness to pretend
So long renown'd a tragedy to mend,
Had not already some deserved your praise
With like attempt. Of all our elder plays
This and Philaster have the loudest fame :
Great are their faults, and glorious is their flame.
In both our English genius is express'd ;
Lofty and bold, but negligently dress'd.

Above our neighbours' our conceptions are ;
But faultless writing is the effect of care.
Our lines reform'd, and not composed in haste,
Polish'd like marble, would like marble last.
But as the present, so the last age writ ;

In both we find like negligence and wit.
Werę we but less indulgent to our faults,
And patience had to cultivate our thoughts,
Our muse would flourish, and a nobler rage
Would honour this than did the Grecian stage.

Upon Ben Jonson. [1638

MIRROR of poets ! mirror of our age !
Which her whole face beholding on thy stage,
Pleased and displeased with her own faults, endures
A remedy like those whom music cures.
Thou hast alone those various inclinations
Which Nature gives to ages, sexes, nations,
So tracèd with thy all-resembling pen,
That whate'er custom has imposed on men,
Or ill-got habit, (which deforms them so,
That scarce a brother can his brother know)
Is represented to the wondering eyes
Of all that see or read thy Comedies.
Whoever in these glasses looks, may find
The spots return'd or graces of his mind ;
And by the help of so divine an art,
At leisure view and dress his nobler part.
Narcissus, cozen'd by that flattering well,
Which nothing could but of his beauty tell,
Had here, discovering the deform'd estate
Of his fond mind, preservèd himself with hate.
But virtue too, as well as vice, is clad
In flesh and blood so well, that Plato had
Beheld what his high fancy once embraced,
Virtue with colours, speech, and motion gracèd.
The sundry postures of thy copious Muse

Who would express, a thousand tongues must use,
Whose fate 's no less peculiar than thy art ;
For as thou could'st all characters impart,
So none could render thine, which still escapes,
Like Proteus, in variety of shapes ;
Who was nor this nor that ; but all we find,
And all we can imagine, in mankind.

To Sir William D'Avenant, upon his two
first books of Gondibert, finished
before his voyage to America. [1650

THUS the wise nightingale that leaves her home,
Her native wood, when storms and winter come,
Pursuing constantly the cheerful Spring
To foreign groves does her old music bring :

The drooping Hebrews' banish'd harps unstrung
At Babylon, upon the willows hung ;
Yours sounds aloud, and tells us you excel
No less in courage than in singing well ;
Whilst unconcern'd you let your country know,
They have improv'rish'd themselves, not you ;
Who with the Muses' help can mock those fates
Which threaten kingdoms, and disorder states.

So Ovid when from Caesar's rage he fled,
The Roman Muse to Pontus with him led ;
Where he so sung, that we through pity's glass,
See Nero milder than Augustus was.
Hereafter such in thy behalf shall be
The indulgent censure of posterity.
To banish those who with such art can sing,
Is a rude crime which its own curse does bring ;
Ages to come shall ne'er know how they fought,

Nor how to love their present youth he taught.
 This to thy self. Now to thy matchless book,
 Wherein those few that can with judgment look,
 May find old love in pure fresh language told,
 Like new-stampt coin made out of angel-gold.
 Such truth in love as the antique world did know,
 In such a style as Courts may boast of now.
 Which no bold tales of gods or monsters swell,
 But human passions, such as with us dwell.
 Man is thy theme, his virtue or his rage
 Drawn to the life in each elaborate page.
 Mars nor Bellona are not namèd here ;
 But such a Gondibert as both might fear.
 Venus had here, and Hebe, been out-shined
 By thy bright Birtha and thy Rhodallind.
 Such is thy happy skill, and such the odds
 Betwixt thy worthies and the Grecian Gods
 Whose deities in vain had here come down,
 Where mortal beauty wears the sovereign crown ;
 Such as of flesh composed, by flesh and blood
 (Though not resisted) may be understood.

SUCKLING.

To my friend Will D'Avenant on his other
 Poems.

THOU hast redeem'd us, Will, and future times
 Shall not account unto the age's crimes
 Dearth of pure wit. Since the great lord of it,
 Donne, parted hence, no man has ever writ

Donne

So near him in his own way ; I would commend
 Particulars, but then how should I end
 Without a volume ? Every line of thine
 Would ask, to praise it right, twenty of mine.

CARTWRIGHT.

Upon the Report of the Printing of the
 Dramatical Poems of Master John
 Fletcher. [1647

Fletcher THOUGH when all Fletcher writ, and the entire
 Man was indulged unto that sacred fire,
 His thoughts and his thoughts' dress, appear'd
 both such
 That 'twas his happy fault to do too much :
 Who therefore wisely did submit each birth
 Beaumont. To knowing Beaumont, ere it did come forth,
 Working again until he said 'twas fit,
 And made him the sobriety of his wit.
 Though thus he call'd his judge into his fame,
 And for that aid allow'd him half the name,
 'Tis known that sometimes he did stand alone,
 That both the sponge and pencil were his own ;
 That himself judg'd himself, could singly do,
 And was at last Beaumont and Fletcher too :
 Else we had lost his Shepherdess, a piece
 Even and smooth, spun from a finer fleece ;
 Where softness reigns, where passions passions
 greet,
 Gentle and high, as floods of balsam meet.
 Where, dress'd in white expressions, sit bright loves,

Drawn, like their fairest queen, by milky doves ;
A piece which Jonson in a rapture bid
Come up a glorified work ; and so it did.

Else had his muse set with his friend, the stage
Had miss'd those poems, which yet take the age ;
The world had lost those rich exemplars, where
Art, language, wit, sit ruling in one sphere ;
Where the fresh matters soar above old themes,
As prophets' raptures do above our dreams ;
Where, in a worthy scorn, he dares refuse
All other gods, and makes the thing his muse ;
Where he calls passions up, and lays them so,
As spirits, awed by him to come and go ;
Where the free author did whate'er he would,
And nothing will'd but what a poet should.

No vast uncivil bulk swells any scene,
The strength 's ingenious, and the vigour clean ;
None can prevent the fancy, and see through
At the first opening ; all stand wondering how
The thing will be, until it is ; which thence,
With fresh delight still cheats, still takes the
sense ;

The whole design, the shadows, the lights, such
That none can say he shews or hides too much :
Business grows up, ripen'd by just increase,
And by as just degrees again doth cease ;
The heats of minutes and affairs are watch'd,
And the nice points of time are met and snatch'd ;
Naught later than it should, naught comes before,
Chemists and calculators do err more :
Sex, age, degree, affections, country, place,
The inward substance and the outward face,
All kept precisely, all exactly fit ;

Jonson.
Shake-
speare.

What he would write, he was before he writ.
'Twixt Jonson's grave, and Shakespeare's lighter
sound,

His muse so steer'd, that something still was found,
Nor this, nor that, nor both, but so his own,
That 'twas his mark, and he by it was known ;
Hence did he take true judgments, hence did strike
All palates some way, though not all alike :
The god of numbers might his numbers crown,
And, listening to them, wish they were his own.
Thus, welcome forth, what ease, or wine, or wit
Durst yet produce : that is, what Fletcher writ !

From Another Set of Verses. [1647

Jonson.
Fletcher.

JONSON hath writ things lasting and divine,
Yet his love-scenes, Fletcher, compared to thine,
Are cold and frosty, and express love so,
As heat with ice, or warm fires mix'd with snow ;
Thou, as if struck with the same generous darts,
Which burn, and reign, in noble lovers' hearts,
Hast clothed affection in such native tires,
And so described them in their own true fires,
Such moving sighs, such undissembled tears,
Such charms of language, such hopes mix'd with
fears,
Such grants after denial, such pursuits
After despair, such amorous recruits,
That some, who sat spectators, have confest
Themselves transform'd to what they saw exprest ;
And felt such shafts steal through their captived
sense,
As made them rise parts, and go lovers thence. '

Nor was thy style wholly composed of groves,
 Or the soft strains of shepherds and their loves ;
 When thou would'st comic be, each smiling birth,
 In that kind, came into the world all mirth,
 All point, all edge, all sharpness ; we did sit
 Sometimes five acts out in pure sprightly wit,
 Which flow'd in such true salt, that we did doubt
 In which scene we laugh'd most two shillings out.
 Shakespeare to thee was dull, whose best jest lies
 I' the ladies' questions, and the fools' replies,
 Old-fashion'd wit, which walk'd from town to town
 In trunk-hose, which our fathers called the clown ;
 Whose wit our nice times would obscenity call,
 And which made bawdry pass for comical.
 Nature was all his art ; thy vein was free
 As his, but without his scurrility ;
 From whom mirth came unforced, no jest perplex'd,
 But, without labour, clean, chaste, and unvex'd.

Shake-
speare.

CRASHAW.

From Wishes.

SIDNEÆN showers
 Of sweet discourse, whose powers
 Can crown old Winter's head with flowers.

Sidney.

Upon Two Green Apricocks sent to Cowley
 by Sir Crashaw.

TAKE these, Time's tardy truants, sent by me
 To be chastised (sweet friend) and chid by thee.

Pale sons of our Pomona ! whose wan cheeks
Have spent the patience of expecting weeks, .
Yet are scarce ripe enough at best to show
The red, but of the blush to thee they owe.
By thy comparison they shall put on
More summer in their shame's reflection,
Than e'er the fruitful Phœbus' flaming kisses
Kindled on their cold lips. O had my wishes
And the dear merits of your Muse, their due,
The year had found some fruit early as you ;
Ripe as those rich composures Time computes
Blossoms, but our blest taste confesses fruits.
How does the April-Autumn mock these cold
Progressions 'twixt whose terms poor Time grows
old !

With thee alone he wears no beard, thy brain
Gives him the morning world's fresh gold again.
'Twas only Paradise, 'tis only thou,
Whose fruit and blossoms both bless the same
bough.

Proud in the pattern of thy precious youth,
Nature (methinks) might easily mend her growth,
Could she in all her births but copy thee.
Into the public years proficiency,
No fruit should have the face to smile on thee
(Young master of the world's maturity)
But such whose sun-born beauties what they
borrow

Of beams to-day, pay back again to-morrow,
Nor need be double-gilt. How then must these
Poor fruits look pale at thy Hesperides !
Fain would I chide their slowness, but in their
Defects I draw mine own dull character.

Take them, and me in them acknowledging,
How much my Summer waits upon thy Spring.

On Mr. George Herbert's Book, intituled
The Temple of Sacred Poems.

Sent to a Gentlewoman.

KNOW you, fair, on what you look ?
Divinest love lies in this book :
Expecting fire from your fair eyes,
To kindle this his sacrifice.
When your hands untie these strings,
Think, you've an angel by the wings ;
One that gladly would be nigh,
To wait upon each morning sigh ;
To flutter in the balmy air
Of your well-perfumèd prayer ;
These white plumes of his he'll lend you,
Which every day to heaven will send you :
To take acquaintance of each sphere,
And all your smooth-faced kindred there.
And though Herbert's name do owe
These devotions ; fairest, know
While I thus lay them on the shrine
Of your white hand, they are mine.

Herbert.

OWEN FELLTHAM. [1638

From Commendatory Verses on Jonson.

As when Augustus reign'd, and war did cease,
Rome's bravest wits were usher'd in by peace :

Shake-
speare,
Beaumont,
Jonson.

So in our halcyon days, we have had now
Wits, to which, all that after come, must bow.
And should the stage compose herself a crown
Of all those wits, which hitherto she has known :
Though there be many that about her brow,
Like sparkling stones, might a quick lustre throw ;
Yet, Shakespeare, Beaumont, Jonson, these three
shall

Make up the gem in the point vertical.
And now, since Jonson 's gone, we well may say,
The stage hath seen her glory and decay.
Whose judgment was't refined it ? or who
Gave laws, by which hereafter all must go,
But solid Jonson ? from whose full strong quill,
Each line did like a diamond drop distil,
Though hard, yet clear.

CLEVELAND.

[1638

To the Memory of Ben Jonson.

THE Muses' fairest light in no dark time ;
The wonder of a learned age ; the line
Which none can pass ; the most proportion'd wit
To Nature, the best judge of what was fit ;
The deepest, plainest, highest, clearest pen ;
The voice most echo'd by consenting men ;
The soul which answer'd best to all well said
By others, and which most requital made ;
Tuned to the highest key of ancient Rome,
Returning all her music with his own,
In whom with nature, study claimed a part,

And yet who to himself owed all his art :
Here lies Ben Jonson ! Every age will look
With sorrow here, with wonder on his book.

COWLEY.

To Sir Will. D'Avenant upon his two first
books of Gondibert, finished before his
Voyage to America. [1650

METHINKS heroic poesy till now
Like some fantastic fairy-land did show ;
Gods, devils, nymphs, witches, and giants' race,
And all but man, in man's best work had place.
Thou, like some worthy knight, with sacred arms
Dost drive the monsters thence, and end the charms :
Instead of those dost men and manners plant,
The things which that rich soil did chiefly want.
Yet even thy mortals do their gods excel,
Taught by thy muse to fight and love so well.

By fatal hands whilst present empires fall,
Thine from the grave past monarchies recall.
So much more thanks from human kind does merit
The poet's fury, than the zealot's spirit.
And from the grave thou mak'st this empire rise,
Not like some dreadful ghost to affright our eyes,
But with more beauty and triumphant state,
Than when it crown'd at proud Verona sate.
So will our God rebuild man's perish'd frame,
And raise him up much better, yet the same :
So God-like poets do past things rehearse,
Not change, but heighten Nature by their verse.

With shame methinks, great Italy must see
Her conquerors raised to life again by thee ;
Raised by such powerful arts, that ancient Rome
May blush no less to see her wit o'ercome.
Some men their fancies like their faith derive,
And count all ill but that which Rome doth give ;
The marks of *Old* and *Catholic* would find ;
To the same chair would Truth and Fiction bind.
Thou in those beaten paths disdain'st to tread,
And scorn'st to live by robbing of the dead.
Since Time does all things change, thou think'st
not fit
This latter age should see all new but wit.
Thy fancy, like a flame, her way does make,
And leaves bright tracks for following pens to take.
Sure 'twas this noble boldness of the Muse
Did thy desire to seek new worlds infuse ;
And ne'er did heaven so much a voyage bless,
If thou canst plant but there with like success.

On the Death of Mr. Crashaw. [1650

POET and Saint ! to thee alone are given
The two most sacred names of Earth and Heaven.
The hard and rarest union which can be,
Next that of Godhead with Humanity.
Long did the Muses banish'd slaves abide,
And built vain pyramids to mortal pride ;
Like Moses, thou, though spells and charms with-
stand,
Hast brought them nobly home back to their
Holy Land.
Ah wretched we, poets of earth ! but thou

Wert living the same poet thou art now.
Whilst angels sing to thee their airs divine,
And joy in an applause so great as thine.
Equal society with them to hold,
Thou need'st not make new songs, but say the old.
And they, kind spirits ! shall all rejoice to see
How little less than they, exalted man may be.

Still the old heathen gods in numbers dwell,
The heavenliest thing on earth still keeps up hell.
Nor have we yet quite purged the Christian land ;
Still idols here, like calves at Bethel, stand.
And though Pan's death long since all oracles
broke,

Yet still in rime the fiend Apollo spoke :
Nay, with the worst of heathen dotage we,
(Vain men !) the monster woman deify ;
Find stars, and tie our fates there in a face,
And Paradise in them by whom we lost it, place.
What different faults corrupt our Muses thus ?
Wanton as girls, as old wives, fabulous

Thy spotless Muse, like Mary, did contain
The boundless Godhead ; she did well disdain
That her eternal verse employ'd should be
On a less subject than Eternity ;
And for a sacred mistress scorn to take,
But her whom God himself scorn'd not his spouse
to make.

It, (in a kind,) her miracle did do ;
A fruitful mother was, and virgin too.

How well, blest Swan, did fate contrive thy
death,
And made thee render up thy tuneful breath
In thy great mistress' arms ? thou most divine,

And richest offering of Loretto's shrine !
Where like some holy sacrifice to expire,
A fever burns thee, and Love lights the fire.
Angels, they say, brought the famed Chapel there,
And bore the sacred load in triumph through the
air.

'Tis surer much they brought thee there, and they,
And thou, their charge, went singing all the way.

Pardon, my mother Church, if I consent
That angels led him when from thee he went,
For even in error sure no danger is
When join'd with so much piety as his.
Ah, mighty God, with shame I speak 't, and grief,
Ah that our greatest faults were in belief !
And our weak reason were even weaker yet,
Rather than thus our wills too strong for it.
His faith perhaps in some nice tenets might
Be wrong ; his life, I'm sure, was in the right.
And I myself a Catholic will be,
So far, at least, great Saint, to pray to thee.
Hail bard triumphant ! and some care bestow
On us, the poets militant below !
Opposed by our old enemy, adverse Chance,
Attack'd by Envy, and by Ignorance,
Enchain'd by Beauty, tortured by Desires,
Exposed by tyrant Love to savage beasts and fires.
Thou from low earth in nobler flames didst rise,
And like Elijah, mount alive the skies.
Elisha-like (but with a wish much less,
More fit thy greatness, and my littleness)
Lo here I beg (I whom thou once didst prove
So humble to Esteem, so good to love)
Not that thy Spirit might on me doubled be,

I ask but half thy mighty spirit for me.
 And when my Muse soars with so strong a wing,
 'T will learn of things divine, and first of thee, to
 sing.

DENHAM.

From Verses on Mr. John Fletcher's
Works. [1647

BUT whither am I stray'd? I need not raise
 Trophies to thee from other men's dispraise ;
 Nor is thy fame on lesser ruins built,
 Nor needs thy juster title the foul guilt
 Of Eastern kings, who to secure their reign,
 Must have their brothers, sons and kindred slain.
 Then was wit's empire at the fatal height,
 When labouring and sinking with its weight,
 From thence a thousand lesser poets sprung,
 Like petty princes from the fall of Rome ;
 When Jonson, Shakespeare, and thyself did sit,
 And sway'd in the triumvirate of wit.
 Yet what from Jonson's oil and sweat did flow,
 Or what more easy Nature did bestow
 On Shakespeare's gentler Muse, in thee full-grown
 Their graces both appear ; yet so, that none
 Can say, here Nature ends and Art begins.
 But mix'd like the elements, and born like twins ;
 So interweaved, so like, so much the same,
 None this mere Nature, that mere Art can name :
 'Twas this the ancients meant ; Nature and Skill
 Are the two tops of their Parnassus hill.

Jonson.

Shake-
speare.

[c. 1667]

On Mr. Abraham Cowley his Death and
Burial amongst the Ancient Poets.

| | |
|---|---|
| Chaucer. | OLD Chaucer, like the morning star, To us discovers day from far ; His light those mists and clouds dissolved, Which our dark nation long involved : But he descending to the shades, Darkness again the age invades. |
| Spenser. | Next (like Aurora) Spenser rose, Whose purple blush the day foreshows ; The other three, with his own fires, Phœbus, the poet's god, inspires ; |
| Shake- speare, Jonson, Fletcher. | By Shakespeare's, Jonson's, Fletcher's lines, Our stage's lustre Rome's outshines : These poets near our princes sleep, And in one grave their mansion keep. They lived to see so many days, Till time had blasted all their bays : But cursed be the fatal hour 'That pluck'd the fairest, sweetest flower That in the Muses' garden grew, And amongst wither'd laurels threw. Time, which made them their fame out-live |
| Cowley. | To Cowley scarce did ripeness give. Old mother Wit, and Nature, gave Shakespeare and Fletcher all they have ; |
| Shake- speare, Fletcher, Spenser, Jonson. | In Spenser and in Jonson, Art Of slower Nature got the start ; But both in him so equal are, |
| Cowley. | None knows which bears the happiest share ; To him no author was unknown, |

Yet what he wrote was all his own ;
He melted not the ancient gold,
Nor with Ben Jonson, did make bold
To plunder all the Roman stores
Of poets, and of orators :
Horace's wit, and Virgil's state,
He did not steal, but emulate !
And when he would like them appear,
Their garb, but not their clothes, did wear :
He not from Rome alone, but Greece,
Like Jason, brought the golden fleece ;
To him that language (though to none
Of the others) as his own was known.
On a stiff gale, (as Flaccus sings),
The Theban swan extends his wings .
When through the ethereal clouds he flies,
To the same pitch our swan doth rise ;
Old Pindar's flights by him are reach'd,
When on that gale his wings are stretch'd ;
His fancy and his judgment such,
Each to the other seem'd too much,
His severe judgment (giving law)
His modest fancy kept in awe :
As rigid husbands jealous are,
When they believe their wives too fair.
His English streams so pure did flow,
As all that saw and tasted know,
But for his Latin vein, so clear,
Strong, full, and high it doth appear,
That were immortal Virgil here,
Him, for his judge, he would not fear ;
Of that great portraiture, so true
A copy pencil never drew.

BUTLER.

On Critics who judge of modern plays precisely by the rules of the ancients. [*p.* 1754

AN English poet should be tried by his peers,
And not by pedants and philosophers,
Incompetent to judge poetic fury,
As butchers are forbid to be of a jury ;
Besides the most intolerable wrong
To try their matters in a foreign tongue,
By foreign jurymen, like Sophocles,
Or Tales falser than Euripides ;
When not an English native dares appear
To be a witness for the prisoner ;
When all the laws they use to arraign and try
The innocent and wrong'd delinquent by,
Were made by a foreign lawyer, and his pupils,
To put an end to all poetic scruples,
And by the advice of virtuosi Tuscans,
Determined all the doubts of socks and buskins ;
Gave judgment on all past and future plays,
As is apparent by Speroni's case,
Which Lope Vega first began to steal,
And after him the French filou Corneille ;
And since our English plagiaries nim,
And steal their far-fet criticisms from him,
And, by an action falsely laid of Trover,
The lumber for their proper goods recover ;
Enough to furnish all the lewd impeachers,
Of witty Beaumont's poetry, and Fletcher's,
Who for a few misprisions of wit,

Beaumont
and
Fletcher.

Are charged by those who ten times worse commit ;
And for misjudging some unhappy scenes,
Are censured for 't with more unlucky sense ;
When all their worst miscarriages delight,
And please more than the best that pedants write.

MARVELL.

On Milton's *Paradise Lost*. [1674

WHEN I beheld the poet blind, yet bold,
In slender book his vast design unfold,
Messiah crown'd, God's reconciled decree,
Rebelling Angels, the forbidden Tree,
Heaven, Hell, Earth, Chaos, all ; the argument
Held me awhile misdoubting his intent,
That he would ruin, (for I saw him strong)
The sacred truths to fable and old song ;
So Sampson grasp'd the temple's posts in spite,
The world o'erwhelming to revenge his sight.

Yet as I read, soon growing less severe,
I liked his project, the success did fear ;
Thro' that wide field how he his way should find,
O'er which lame faith leads understanding blind ;
Lest he'd perplex the things he would explain,
And what was easy he should render vain.

Or if a work so infinite he spann'd,
Jealous I was that some less skilful hand,
(Such as disquiet always what is well,
And by ill-imitating would excel,)
Might hence presume the whole creation's day
To change in scenes, and show it in a play.

Pardon me, mighty poet, nor despise
My causeless, yet not impious surmise,
But I am now convinced, and none will dare
Within thy labours to pretend a share.
Thou hast not miss'd one thought that could be fit,
And all that was improper dost omit ;
So that no room is here for writers left,
But to detect their ignorance or theft.

That majesty which thro' thy work doth reign
Draws the devout, deterring the profane.
And things divine thou treat'st of in such state
As them preserves, and thee, inviolate.
At once delight and horror on us seize,
Thou sing'st with so much gravity and ease ;
'And above human flight dost soar aloft,
With plume so strong, so equal, and so soft :
The bird named from that paradise you sing
So never flags, but always keeps on wing.
Where could'st thou words of such a compass find ?
Whence furnish such a vast expense of mind ?
Just heaven thee, like Tiresias, to requite,
Rewards with prophecy thy loss of sight.

Dry den.
Well might thou scorn thy readers to allure
With tinkling rime, of thy own sense secure ;
While the Town-Bayes writes all the while and
spells,

And like a pack-horse tires without his bells.
Their fancies like our bushy points appear,
The poets tag them ; we for fashion wear.
I too, transported by the mode, offend,
And while I meant to praise thee, miscommend.
Thy verse created like thy theme sublime,
In number, weight, and measure, needs not rime.

VAUGHAN.

To Sir William D'Avenant upon his
Gondibert. [1650

WELL, we are rescued ! and by thy rare pen
Poets shall live, when princes die like men.
Th' hast clear'd the prospect to our harmless hill,
Of late years clouded with imputed ill,
And the soft, youthful couples there may move,
As chaste as stars converse and smile above.
Th' hast taught their language and their love to flow
Calm as rose-leaves, and pure as virgin-snow,
Which doubly feasts us, being so refined
They both delight, and dignify the mind ;
Like to the watery music of some spring,
Whose pleasant flowings at once wash and sing.

And where before heroic poems were
Made up of spirits, prodigies, and fear,
And shew'd—through all the melancholy flight—
Like some dark region overcast with night,
As if the poet had been quite dismay'd,
While only giants and enchantments sway'd ;
Thou like the sun, whose eye brooks no disguise
Hast chased them hence, and with discoveries
So rare and learned fill'd the place, that we
Those famed grandezas find out-done by thee,
And under-foot see all those vizards hurl'd,
Which bred the wonder of the former world.
'Twas dull to sit as our forefathers did,
At crumbs and voiders, and because unbid,

Refrain wise appetite. This made thy fire
 Break through the ashes of thy aged sire,
 To lend the world such a convincing light
 As shews his fancy darker than his sight.
 Nor was't alone the bars and lengths of days
 —Though those gave strength and stature to his
 bays—

Encounter'd thee, but what's an old complaint
 And kills the fancy, a forlorn restraint ;
 How could'st thou mured in solitary stones
 Dress Birtha's smiles, though well thou might'st
 her groans?

And, strangely eloquent, thy self divide
 'Twixt sad misfortunes, and a bloomy bride?
 • Through all the tenour of thy ample song
 Spun from thy own rich store, and shared among
 Those fair adventurers, we plainly see
 The imputed gifts, inherent are in thee.
 Then live for ever—and by high desert—
 In thy own mirror, matchless Gondibert,
 And in bright Birtha leave thy love inshrined
 Fresh as her emrauld, and fair as her mind,
 While all confess thee—as they ought to do—
 The prince of poets and of lovers too.

DRYDEN.

On Palemon and Arcite. [170

Chaucer.

THE bard who first adorn'd our native tongue,
 Tuned to his British lyre this ancient song :

Which Homer might without a blush rehearse,
And leaves a doubtful palm in Virgil's verse :
He match'd their beauties where they most excel ;
Of love sung better, and of arms as well.

From The Art of Poetry.

| | |
|---|----------|
| IN all he writes appears a noble fire ; | Juvenal. |
| To follow such a master then desire. | |
| Chaucer alone, fix'd on this solid base, | Chaucer. |
| In his old style conserves a modern grace : | |
| Too happy, if the freedom of his rimes | |
| Offended not the method of our times. | |

Under Mr. Milton's picture before his
Paradise Lost.

| | |
|---|---------|
| THREE Poets in three distant ages born, | |
| Greece, Italy, and England did adorn. | |
| The first in loftiness of thought surpass'd ; | Homer. |
| The next, in majesty ; in both the last. | Virgil. |
| The force of nature could no further go ; | |
| To make a third she join'd the former two. | Milton. |

From Prologue to Aurengzebe. [1672

OUR author by experience, finds it true,
'Tis much more hard to please himself than you ;
And out of no feign'd modesty, this day
Damns his laborious trifle of a play :
Not that it's worse than what before he writ,
But he has now another taste of wit ;
And to confess a truth, though out of time,
Grows weary of his long-loved misress, Rime.

Shake-
speare.

Passion's too fierce to be in fetters bound,
 And nature flies him like enchanted ground :
 What verse can do he has perform'd in this,
 Which he presumes the most correct of his ;
 But spite of all his pride, a secret shame
 Invades his breast at Shakespeare's sacred name :
 Awed when he hears his god-like Romans rage,
 He, in a just despair would quit the stage ;
 And to an age less polish'd, more unskill'd,
 Does with disdain the foremost honours yield.
 As with the greater dead he dares not strive,
 He would not match his verse with those who live :
 Let him retire, betwixt two ages cast,
 The first of this, and hindmost of the last.

From Prologue to Troilus and Cressida.

The ghost of Shakespeare *log.* [1679

SEE, my loved Britons, see your Shakespeare rise,
 An awful ghost confess'd to human eyes !
 Unnamed, methinks, distinguish'd I had been
 From other shades by this eternal green,
 About whose wreaths the vulgar poets strive,
 And with a touch their wither'd bays revive.
 Untaught, unpractised, in a barbarous age,
 I found not, but created first the stage.
 And, if I drain'd no Greek or Latin store,
 'Twas that my own abundance gave me more.
 On foreign trade I needed not rely,
 Like fruitful Britain, rich without supply.
 In this my rough-drawn play you shall behold
 Some master-strokes, so manly and so bold,
 That he who meant to alter, found 'em such,

He shook, and thought it sacrilege to touch.
 Now, where are the successors to my name?
 What bring they to fill out a poet's fame?
 Weak, short-lived issues of a feeble age;
 Scarce living to be christen'd on the stage!
 For humour *farce*, for love they *rime* dispense,
 That tolls the knell for their departed sense.

From Prologue to the Tempest. [1667

As when a tree's cut down, the secret root
 Lives underground, and thence new branches
 shoot;

So from old Shakespeare's honour'd dust, this
 day

Shake-
 speare.

Springs up and buds a new reviving play:
 Shakespeare, who (taught by none) did first impart
 To Fletcher wit, to labouring Jonson art.

Fletcher
 and •
 Jonson.

He, monarch-like, gave those his subjects, law;
 And is that nature which they paint and draw.
 Fletcher reach'd that which on his heights did
 grow,

While Jonson crept, and gather'd all below.

This did his love, and this his mirth digest:

One imitates him most, the other best.

If they have since outwrit all other men,

'Tis with the drops which fell from Shakespeare's
 pen.

The storm, which vanish'd on the neighbouring
 shore,

Was taught by Shakespeare's *Tempest* first to
 roar.

That innocence and beauty which did smile

In Fletcher, grew on this enchanted isle.
 But Shakespeare's magic could not copied be ;
 Within that circle none durst walk but he.
 I must confess 'twas bold, nor would you now
 That liberty to vulgar wits allow,
 Which works by magic supernatural things :
 But Shakespeare's power is sacred as a king's.
 Those legends from old priesthood were received,
 And he then writ, as people then believed.

From Prologue to Albumazar. [1668

Jonson.

To say, this comedy pleased long ago,
 Is not enough to make it pass you now.
 Yet, gentlemen, your ancestors had wit ;
 When few men censured, and when fewer writ.
 And Jonson, of those few the best, chose this,
 As the best model of his masterpiece.
 Subtle was got by our Albumazar,
 That Alchymist by this Astrologer ;
 Here he was fashion'd, and we may suppose
 He liked the fashion well, who wore the clothes.
 But Ben made nobly his what he did mould ;
 What was another's lead becomes his gold :
 Like an unrighteous conqueror he reigns,
 Yet rules that well, which he unjustly gains.

*Epilogue to the Second Part of The
 Conquest of Granada.* [1672

Jonson.

THEY who have best succeeded on the stage,
 Have still conform'd their genius to their age.
 Thus Jonson did mechanic humour show,

When men were dull, and conversation low.
 Their comedy was faultless, but 'twas coarse :
 Cobb's tankard was a jest, and Otter's horse.
 And, as their comedy, their love was mean ;
 Except, by chance, in some one labour'd scene,
 Which must atone for an ill-written play.
 They rose, but at their height could seldom stay.
 Fame then was cheap, and the first comer sped ;
 And they have kept it since by being dead.
 But, were they now to write, when Critics weigh
 Each line, and every word, throughout a play,
 None of them, no, not Jonson in his height,
 Could pass, without allowing grains for weight.
 Think it not envy that these truths are told :
 Our poet 's not malicious though he 's bold.
 'Tis not to brand them, that their faults are shown,
 But by their errors, to excuse his own.
 If love and honour now are higher raised,
 'Tis not the poet, but the age is praised.
 Wit 's now arrived to a more high degree ;
 Our native language more refined and free.
 Then, one of these is, consequently, true ;
 That what this poet writes comes short of you,
 And imitates you ill (which most he fears),
 Or else his writing is not worse than theirs.
 Yet though you judge (as sure the critics will),
 That some before him writ with greater skill,
 In this one praise he has their fame surpast,
 To please an age more gallant than the last.

Jonson

From The Art of Poetry.

- OBSERVE the town, and study well the court ;
 For thither various characters resort :
 Jonson. Thus 'twas great Jonson purchased his renown,
 And in his art had borne away the crown ;
 If, less desirous of the people's praise,
 He had not with low farce debased his plays ;
 Mix'd dull buffoonery with wit refined,
 And Harlequin with noble Terence join'd.
 When in the Fox I see the tortoise hiss'd
 I lose the author of the Alchymist.
- YOUR bully poets, bully heroes write :
 Chapman. Chapman in Bussy d'Ambois took delight,
 And thought perfection was to huff and fight.
- OUR ancient verse, as homely as the times,
 Was rude, unmeasured, overclogg'd with rhymes ;
 Number and cadence that have since been shown,
 To those unpolish'd writers were unknown.
 Fairfax Fairfax was he, who in that darker age,
 By his just rules restrain'd poetic rage ;
 Spenser. Spenser did next in pastorals excel,
 And taught the noble art of writing well :
 To stricter rules the stanza did restrain,
 And found for poetry a richer vein.
- D'Avenant. Then D'Avenant came ; who with a new-found art,
 Changed all, spoil'd all, and had his way apart :
 His haughty Muse all others did despise,
 And thought in triumph to bear off the prize,
 Till the sharp-sighted critics of the times,
 In their Mock-Gondibert, exposed his rhymes ;

The laurels he pretended did refuse,
 And dash'd the hopes of his aspiring muse.
 This headstrong writer falling from on high,
 Made following authors take less liberty.
 Waller came last, but was the first whose art
 Just weight and measure did to verse impart ;
 That of a well-placed word could teach the force,
 And show'd for poetry a nobler course ;
 His happy genius did our tongue refine,
 And easy words with pleasing numbers join :
 His verses to good method did apply,
 And changed hard discord to soft harmony.
 All own'd his laws ; which long approved and tried,
 To present authors now may be a guide.
 Tread boldly in his steps, secure from fear,
 And be, like him, in your expressions clear.

Waller.

LET not so mean a style your muse debase :
 But learn from Butler the buffooning grace.

Butler.

[1693

Epistle to my dear friend, Mr. Congreve
 on his Comedy called The Double Dealer.

WELL then, the promised hour is come at last,
 The present age of wit obscures the past ;
 Strong were our sires, and as they fought they
 writ,

Conquering with force of arms and dint of wit :
 Theirs was the giant race, before the flood ;
 And thus when Charles return'd our empire stood.
 Like Janus he the stubborn soil manured,
 With rules of husbandry the rankness cured ;

- Tuned us to manners, when the stage was rude ;
 And boisterous English wit with art indued.
 Our age was cultivated thus at length ;
 But what we gain'd in skill we lost in strength.
 Our builders were with want of genius cursed ;
 The second temple was not like the first :
 Till you, the best Vitruvius came at length ;
 Our beauties equal, but excel our strength.
 Firm Doric pillars found your solid base :
 The fair Corinthian crowns the higher space ;
 Thus all below is strength, and all above is grace.
- Congreve. In easy dialogue is Fletcher's praise ;
 He moved the mind, but had not power to raise.
- Fletcher. Great Jonson did by strength of judgment please ;
 Yet doubling Fletcher's force, he wants his ease.
 In differing talents both adorn'd their age ;
 One for the study, t' other for the stage.
 But both to Congreve justly shall submit,
 One match'd in judgment, both o'ermatched in
 wit.
- In him all beauties of this age we see,
 Etherege his courtship, Southerne's purity,
 The satire, wit, and strength of manly Wycherly.
- Etherege
 and
 Southerne.
 Wycherly. All this in blooming youth you have achieved :
 Nor are your foil'd contemporaries grieved.
 So much the sweetness of your manners move,
 We cannot envy you, because we love.
 Fabius might joy in Scipio, when he saw
 A beardless consul made against the law,
 And join his suffrage to the votes of Rome ;
 Though he with Hannibal was overcome.
 Thus old Romano bow'd to Raphael's fame,
 And scholar to the youth he taught became.

O that your brows my laurel had sustain'd !
 Well had I been deposed, if you had reign'd ;
 The father had descended like the son ;
 For only you are lineal to the throne.
 Thus, when the state one Edward did depose,
 A greater Edward in his room arose.
 But now, not I, but poetry is cursed ;
 For Tom the second reigns like Tom the first.
 But let them not mistake my patron's part,
 Nor call his charity, their own desert.
 Yet this I prophesy ; thou shalt be seen,
 (Though with some short parenthesis between)
 High on the throne of wit, and seated there,
 Not mine, that 's little, but thy laurel wear.
 Thy first attempt an early promise made ;
 That early promise this has more than paid.
 So bold, yet so judiciously you dare,
 That your least praise is to be regular.
 Time, place, and action, may with pains be
 wrought ;
 But genius must be born, and never can be taught.
 This is your portion ; this your native store ;
 Heaven, that but once was prodigal before,
 To Shakespeare gave as much ; she could not give
 him more.

Shake-
 speare.

Maintain your post : that 's all the fame you need ;
 For 'tis impossible you should proceed.
 Already I am worn with cares and age,
 And just abandoning the ungrateful stage :
 Unprofitably kept at heaven's expense,
 I live a rent-charge on his providence :
 But you whom every muse and grace adorn,
 Whom I foresee to better fortune born,

Be kind to my remains ; and O defend,
 Against your judgment, your departed friend !
 Let not the insulting foe my fame pursue,
 But shade those laurels which descend to you :
 And take for tribute what these lines express :
 You merit more ; nor could my love do less.

ROCHESTER.

From An Allusion to the tenth Satire of the
first book of Horace. [16

Dryden.

WELL, sir, 'tis granted ; I said Dryden's rimes
 Were stolen, unequal, nay dull, many times :
 What foolish patron is there found of his,
 So blindly partial to deny me this ?
 But that his plays, embroider'd up and down
 With wit and learning, justly please the town,
 In the same paper I as freely own.
 Yet, having this allow'd, the heavy mass
 That stuffs up his loose volumes must not pass ;
 For by that rule I might as well admit
 Crown's tedious scenes for poetry and wit.

* * * * *

But to be just, 'twill to his praise be found,
 His excellences more than faults abound :
 Nor dare I from his sacred temples tear
 The laurel, which he best deserves to wear.
 But does not Dryden find even Jonson dull ?
 Beaumont and Fletcher incorrect, and full
 Of lewd lines, as he calls them ? Shakespeare
 style

Jonson.
 Beaumont
 and
 Fletcher

Stiff and affected? to his own the while
 Allowing all the justice that his pride
 So arrogantly had to these denied?
 And may not I have leave impartially
 To search and censure Dryden's works, and try
 If those gross faults his choice pen doth commit
 Proceed from want of judgment, or of wit?
 Or, if his lumpish fancy doth refuse
 Spirit and grace to his loose slattern Muse?
 Five hundred verses every morning writ,
 Prove him no more a poet than a wit:
 Such scribbling authors have been seen before;
 Mustapha, the Island Princess, forty more,
 Were things perhaps composed in half an hour.

A JEST in scorn points out and hits the thing
 More home, than the remotest satire's sting.
 Shakespeare and Jonson did in this excel,
 And might herein be imitated well;
 Whom refined Etherege copies not at all,
 But is himself a sheer original.

Shake-
 speare and
 Jonson.
 Etherege

* * * * *
 Waller, by nature for the bays design'd,
 With force, and fire, and fancy unconfined
 In panegyric does excel mankind.
 He best can turn, enforce, and soften things,
 To praise great conquerors, and flatter kings.
 For pointed satire I would Buckhurst choose,
 The best good man, with the worst-natured Muse.

Waller.

Buckhurst

OLDHAM.

*From A Satire dissuading from [1681
Poetry.*

Butler.

ON Butler, who can think without just rage,
The glory and the scandal of the age?
Fair stood his hopes, when first he came to town,
Met every where with welcomes of renown,
Courtèd, caress'd by all, with wonder read,
And promises of princely favour fed :
But what reward for all had he at last,
After a life in dull expectance past ?
The wretch, at summing up his mis-spent days,
Found nothing left but poverty and praise.
Of all his gains by verse he could not save
Enough to purchase flannel and a grave :
Reduced to want, he in due time fell sick,
Was fain to die, and be interrèd on tick,
And well might bless the fever that was sent
To rid him hence, and his worse fate prevent.

PERIOD IV.

POETS BORN IN THE
XVIITH CENTURY.

ADDISON TO SWIFT.

ADDISON.

An Account of the greatest English Poets.

To Mr. Henry Sacheverell. [1694

SINCE, dearest Harry, you will needs request
A short account of all the muse-possess,
That, down from Chaucer's days to Dryden's -
times,

I have spent their noble rage in British rimes ;
Without more preface, writ in formal length,
To speak the undertaker's want of strength,
I'll try to make their several beauties known,
And show their verses' worth, though not my own.

Long had our dull forefathers slept supine,
Nor felt the raptures of the tuneful nine ;
Till Chaucer first, a merry bard, arose,
And many a story told in rime and prose.
But age has rusted what the poet writ,
Worn out his language, and obscured his wit :
In vain he jests in his unpolish'd strain,
And tries to make his readers laugh in vain.

Chaucer.

Old Spenser next, warm'd with poetic rage,
In ancient tales amused a barbarous age ;
An age that yet uncultivate and rude,

Spenser.

Where'er the poet's fancy led, pursued
Through pathless fields and unfrequented floods,
To dens of dragons and enchanted woods.
But now the mystic tale that pleased of yore,
Can charm an understanding age no more ;
The long-spun allegories fulsome grow,
While the dull moral lies too plain below.
We view well-pleased at distance all the sights
Of arms and palfreys, battles, fields, and fights,
And damsels in distress, and courteous knights.
But, when we look too near, the shades decay,
And all the pleasing landscape fades away.

Great Cowley then, a mighty genius, wrote,
O'er-run with wit, and lavish of his thought :
His turns too closely on the reader press :
He more had pleased us, had he pleased us less.
One glittering thought no sooner strikes our eyes
With silent wonder, but new wonders rise.
As in the milky-way a shining white
O'erflows the heavens with one continued light ;
That not a single star can show his rays,
Whilst jointly all promote the common blaze.
Pardon, great poet, that I dare to name
The unnumber'd beauties of thy verse with blame ;
Thy fault is only wit in its excess,
But wit like thine in any shape will please.
What muse like thine can equal hints inspire,
And fit the deep-mouth'd Pindar to thy lyre :
Pindar, whom others in a labour'd strain,
And forced expression, imitate in vain ?
Well-pleased in thee he soars with new delight,
And plays in more unbounded verse, and takes a
nobler flight.

Blest man ! whose spotless life and charming lays
Employ'd the tuneful prelate in thy praise :
Blest man ! who now shall be for ever known,
In Sprat's successful labours and thy own.

But Milton next, with high and haughty stalks, Milton.
Unfetter'd in majestic numbers walks ;
No vulgar hero can his muse engage ;
Nor earth's wide scene confine his hallow'd rage.
See ! see, he upward springs, and towering high
Spurns the dull province of mortality,
Shakes heaven's eternal throne with dire alarms,
And sets the almighty thunderer in arms.
Whate'er his pen describes I more than see,
Whilst every verse, array'd in majesty,
Bold and sublime, my whole attention draws,
And seems above the critic's nicer laws.
How are you struck with terror and delight,
When angel with archangel copes in fight !
When great Messiah's outspread banner shines,
How does the chariot rattle in his lines !
What sounds of brazen wheels, { what thunder,
scarc,
And stun the reader with the din of war !
With fear my spirits and my blood retire,
To see the seraphs sunk in clouds of fire ;
But when, with eager steps, from hence I rise,
And view the first gay scenes of Paradise ;
What tongue, what words of rapture can express
A vision so profuse of pleasantness !
O, had the poet ne'er profaned his pen,
To varnish o'er the guilt of faithless men,
His other works might have deserved applause !
But now the language can't support the cause ;

While the clean current, though serene and bright,
Betrays a bottom odious to the sight.

But now my muse a softer strain rehearse,
Turn every line with art, and smooth thy verse ;
Waller. The courtly Waller next commands thy lays :
Muse, turn thy verse, with art, to Waller's praise !
While tender airs and lovely dames inspire
Soft melting thoughts, and propagate desire ;
So long shall Waller's strains our passion move,
And Sacharissa's beauties kindle love.
Thy verse, harmonious bard, and flattering song,
Can make the vanquish'd great, the coward strong.
Thy verse can show even Cromwell's innocence,
And compliment the storms that bore him hence.
O, had thy muse not come an age too soon,
But seen great Nassau on the British throne !
How had his triumphs glitter'd in thy page,
And warm'd thee to a more exalted rage !
What scenes of death and horror had we view'd,
And how had Boyne's wide current reek'd in blood !
Or if Maria's charms thou would'st rehearse,
In smother numbers and a softer verse ;
Thy pen had well described her graceful air,
And Gloriana would have seem'd more fair.

Roscommon. Nor must Roscommon pass neglected by,
That makes even rules a noble poetry ;
Rules whose deep sense and heavenly numbers
show

The best of critics, and of poets too.
Denham Nor, Denham, must we e'er forget thy strains,
While Cooper's Hill commands the neighbouring
plains.

Dryden. But see where artful Dryden next appears

Grown old in rime, but charming even in years.
 Great Dryden next, whose tuneful muse affords
 The sweetest numbers, and the fittest words.
 Whether in comic sounds or tragic airs
 She forms her voice, she moves our smiles or tears.
 If satire or heroic strains she writes,
 Her hero pleases, and her satire bites.
 From her no harsh unartful numbers fall,
 She wears all dresses, and she charms in all.
 How might we fear our English poetry,
 That long has flourish'd, should decay with thee ;
 Did not the muses' other hope appear,
 Harmonious Congreve, and forbid our fear : Congreve.
 Congreve ! whose fancy's unexhausted store
 Has given already much, and promised more.
 Congreve shall still preserve thy fame alive,
 And Dryden's muse shall in his friend survive.

PRIOR.

From An Ode.

[1706]

WHEN bright Eliza ruled Britannia's state,
 Widely distributing her high commands,
 And boldly wise, and fortunately great,
 Freed the glad nations from tyrannic bands ;
 An equal genius was in Spenser found ; Spenser.
 To the high theme he match'd his noble lays ;
 He travell'd England o'er on fairy ground,
 In mystic notes to sing his monarch's praise :
 Reciting wondrous truths in pleasing dreams,
 He deck'd Eliza's head with Gloriana's beams.

From Alma.

[1718]

Butler.

BUT shall we take the Muse abroad
 To drop her idly on the road?
 And leave our subject in the middle;
 As Butler did his bear and fiddle?
 Yet he, consummate master, knew
 When to recede, and where pursue;
 His noble negligences teach
 What others' toils despair to reach.
 He, perfect dancer, climbs the rope,
 And balances your fear and hope:
 If, after some distinguish'd leap,
 He drops his pole, and seems to slip,
 Straight gathering all his active strength,
 He rises higher half his length.
 With wonder you approve his sleight;
 And owe your pleasure to your fright.
 But like poor Andrew I advance,
 False mimic of my master's dance;
 Around the cord awhile I sprawl,
 And thence, though low, in earnest fall.

Pope.

O ABELARD, ill-fated youth,
 Thy tale will justify this truth:
 But well I weet, thy cruel wrong
 Adorns a nobler poet's song.
 Dan Pope, for thy misfortune grieved,
 With kind concern and skill has weaved
 A silken web; and ne'er shall fade
 Its colours; gently has he laid
 The mantle o'er thy sad distress:

And Venus shall the texture bless.
He o'er the weeping nun has drawn
Such artful folds of sacred lawn ;
That love, with equal grief and pride,
Shall see the crime he strives to hide ;
And, softly drawing back the veil,
The god shall to his votaries tell
Each conscious tear, each blushing grace,
That deck'd dear Eloisa's face.

YOUNG.

From An Epistle to Lord Lansdowne. [1712

OUR foes confess, nor we the praise refuse,
The drama glories in the British muse.
The French are delicate, and nicely lead
Of close intrigue the labyrinthine thread ;
Our genius more affects the grand, than fine,
Our strength can make the great plain action
shine :

They raise a great curiosity indeed,
From his dark maze to see the hero freed ;
We rouse the affections, and that hero show
Gasping beneath some formidable blow :
They sigh ; we weep : the Gallic doubt and care
We heighten into terror and despair ;
Strike home, the strongest passions boldly touch,
Nor fear our audience should be pleased too much.
What's great in nature we can greatly draw,
Nor thank for beauties the dramatic law.

Shake-
speare

The fate of Cæsar is a tale too plain
 The fickle Gallic taste to entertain ;
 Their art would have perplexed, and interwove
 The golden arras with gay flowers of love ;
 We know heaven made him a far greater man
 Than any Cæsar in a human plan,
 And such we draw him, nor are too refined
 To stand affected with what heaven design'd
 To claim attention, and the heart invade ;
 Shakespeare but wrote the play the Almighty made.
 Our neighbour's stage art too bare-faced betrays,
 'Tis great Corneille at every scene we praise ;
 On nature's surer aid Britannia calls,
 None think of Shakespeare till the curtain falls ;
 Then with a sigh returns our audience home,
 From Venice, Egypt, Persia, Greece, or Rome.

France yields not to the glory of our lines,
 But manly conduct of our strong designs ;
 That oft they think more justly we must own,
 Not ancient Greece a truer sense has shown :
 Greece thought but justly, they think justly too ;
 We sometimes err by striving more to do.
 So well are Racine's meanest people taught,
 But change a sentiment, you make a fault ;
 Nor dare we charge them with the want of flame :
 When we boast more, we own ourselves to blame.

Shake-
speare.

And yet in Shakespeare something still I find,
 That makes me less esteem all human kind ;
 He made one nature, and another found,
 Both in his page with master strokes abound :
 His witches, fairies, and enchanted isle,
 Bid us no longer at our nurses smile ;
 Of lost historians we almost complain,

Nor think it the creation of his brain.
Who lives, when his Othello's in a trance?
With his great Talbot too he conquer'd France.

TICKELL.

On the Death of Mr. Addison. [1719

If dumb too long, the drooping Muse hath stay'd,
And left her debt to Addison unpaid,
Blame not her silence, Warwick! but bemoan,
And judge, oh judge my bosom by your own!
What mourner ever felt poetic fires?
Slow comes the verse that real woe inspires;
Grief unaffected suits but ill with art,
Or flowing members with a bleeding heart.

Can I forget the dismal night that gave
My soul's best part for ever to the grave!
How silent did his old companions tread,
By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead,
Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
Through rows of warriors and through walks of
kings!

What awe did the slow solemn knell inspire,
The pealing organ and the pausing choir, •
The duties by the lawn-robed prelate paid,
And the last words that dust to dust convey'd!
While speechless o'er thy closing grave we bend,
Accept these tears, thou dear departed friend!
Oh, gone for ever! take this long adieu,
And sleep in peace next thy loved Montague.
To strew fresh laurels let the task be mine,

A frequent pilgrim at thy sacred shrine ;
Mine with true sighs thy absence to bemoan,
And grave with faithful epitaphs thy stone.
If e'er from me thy loved memorial part,
May shame afflict this alienated heart !
Of thee forgetful if I form a song,
My lyre be broken, and untuned my tongue ;
My grief be doubled, from thy image free,
And mirth a torment unchastised by thee !

Oft let me range the gloomy aisles alone,
Sad luxury ! to vulgar minds unknown ;
Along the walls where speaking marbles show
What worthies form the hallow'd mould below :
Proud names ! who once the reign of empire held,
In arms who triumph'd, or in arts excell'd ;
Chiefs, graced with scars and prodigal of blood,
Stern patriots, who for sacred freedom stood,
Just men, by whom impartial laws were given,
And saints, who taught and led the way to
Heaven !

Ne'er to these chambers, where the mighty rest,
Since their foundation came a nobler guest,
Nor e'er was to the bowers of bliss convey'd
A fairer spirit, or more welcome shade.

In what new region to the just assign'd,
What new employments please the unbodied mind !
A winged Virtue through the ethereal sky,
From world to world unweari'd does he fly,
Or curious trace the long laborious maze
Of Heaven's decrees where wondering angels gaze !
Does he delight to hear bold seraphs tell
How Michael battled, and the dragon fell ;
Or, mix'd with milder cherubim, to glow

In hymns of love, not ill essay'd below ?
Or dost thou warn poor mortals left behind ?
A task well-suited to thy gentle mind.
Oh ! if sometimes thy spotless form descend,
To me thy aid, thou guardian genius ! lend.
When rage misguides me, or when pleasure charms,
When pain distresses, or when fear alarms,
In silent whisperings, purer thoughts impart,
And turn from ill a frail and feeble heart ;
Lead through the paths thy virtue trod before,
Till bliss shall join nor death can part us more.

That awful form which, so the Heavens decree,
Must still be loved and still deplored by me,
In nightly visions seldom fails to rise.
Or, roused by fancy, meets my waking eyes.
If business calls, or crowded courts invite,
The unblemish'd statesman seems to strike my
sight ;

If in the stage I seek to soothe my care,
I meet his soul, which breathes in Cato, there ;
If pensive to the rural shades I rove,
His shape o'ertakes me in the lonely grove ;
'Twas there of just and good he reason'd strong,
Clear'd some great truth, or raised some serious
song ;

There patient show'd us the wise course to steer,
A candid censor and a friend sincere ;
There taught us how to live, and (oh ! too high
The price for knowledge) taught us how to die.

Thou hill ! whose brow the antique structures
grace,
Reared by bold chiefs of Warwick's noble race,
Why, once so loved, whene'er thy bower appears,

O'er my dim eye-balls glance the sudden tears !
How sweet were once thy prospects, fresh and fair
Thy sloping walks and unpolluted air !
How sweet the glooms beneath thy agèd trees,
Thy noontide shadow and thy evening breeze !
His image thy forsaken bowers restore,
Thy walks and airy prospects charm no more ;
No more the summer, in thy glooms allay'd,
Thy evening breezes and thy noonday shade.

From other ills, however fortune frown'd,
Some refuge in the Muse's art I found ;
Reluctant now I touch the trembling string,
Bereft of him who taught me how to sing ;
And these sad accents, murmur'd o'er his urn,
Betray that absence they attempt to mourn.

O ! must I then (now fresh my bosom bleeds,
And Craggs, in death, to Addison succeeds)
The verse, begun to one lost friend, prolong,
And weep a second in the unfinish'd song !
These works divine, which on his death-bed laid,
To thee, O Craggs ! the expiring sage convey'd,
Great but ill-omen'd monument of fame,
Nor he survived to give, nor thou to claim ;
Swift after him thy social spirit flies,
And close to his, how soon ! thy coffin lies.
Bless'd pair ! whose union future bards shall tell
In future tongues : each other's boast, farewell !
Farewell ! whom join'd in fame, in friendship tried,
No chance could sever, nor the grave divide.

POPE.

From Windsor Forest. [1704

YE sacred Nine ! that all my soul possess,
 Whose raptures fire me, and whose visions bless,
 Bear me, O bear me to sequester'd scenes,
 The bowery mazes, and surrounding greens ;
 To Thames' banks, which fragrant breezes fill,
 Or where ye muses sport on Cooper's hill.
 (On Cooper's hill eternal wreaths shall grow,
 While lasts the mountain, or while Thames shall
 flow.)

I seem through consecrated walks to rove ;
 I hear soft music die along the grove ;
 Led by the sound I rove from shade to shade,
 By god-like poets venerable made :
 Here his first lays majestic Denham sung ;
 There the last numbers flow'd from Cowley's
 tongue.

Denham
 Cowley.

O early lost ! what tears the river shed,
 When the sad pomp along his banks was led !
 His drooping swans on every note expire,
 And on his willows hung each Muse's lyre.
 Since fate relentless stopp'd their heavenly voice,
 No more the forests ring, or groves rejoice ;
 Who now shall charm the shades where Cowley
 strung

His living harp, and lofty Denham sung ?

* * * * * *

Here noble Surrey felt the sacred rage,
 Surrey, the Granville of a former age :

Surrey.

Matchless his pen, victorious was his lance,
 Bold in the lists, and graceful in the dance :
 In the same shades the Cupids tuned his lyre,
 To the same notes, of love, and soft desire ;
 Fair Geraldine, bright object of his vow,
 Then fill'd the groves, as heavenly Mira now.

From An Essay on Criticism. [1711

Denham and
 Waller.

LEAVE such to tune their own dull rimes and know
 What's roundly smooth, or languishingly slow :
 And praise the easy vigour of a line
 Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness
 join.

* * * * *

Dryden.

I fear how Timotheus' varied lays surprise,
 And bid alternate passions fall and rise !
 While at each change the son of Libyan Jove
 Now burns with glory, and then melts with love ;
 Now his fierce eyes with sparkling fury glow,
 Now sighs steal out, and tears begin to flow :
 Persians and Greeks like turns of nature found,
 And the world's victor stood subdued by sound !
 The power of music all our hearts allow,
 And what Timotheus was is Dryden now.

*From the First Epistle of the second
 book of Horace.* [1733

Chaucer.
 Skelton.

AUTHORS, like coins, grow dear as they grow
 old ;
 It is the rust we value, not the gold.
 Chaucer's worst ribaldry is learn'd by rote,
 And beastly Skelton heads of houses quote.

| | |
|--|------------|
| One likes no language but the Fairy Queen ; | Spenser. |
| A Scot will fight for Christ's Kirk o' the Green ; | James 1st. |
| And each true Briton is to Ben so civil, | Jonson. |
| He swears the Muses met him at the Devil. | |

* * * * *

| | |
|---|-------------------|
| Shakespeare (whom you and every playhouse bill Style the divine ! the matchless ! what you will) | Shake- speare. |
|---|-------------------|

| | |
|---|--|
| For gain, not glory, wing'd his roving flight, And grew immortal in his own despite. | |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|---------|
| Ben, old and poor, as little seem'd to heed | Jonson. |
|---|---------|

| | |
|--|---------|
| The life to come in every poet's creed. Who now reads Cowley ? if he pleases yet, | Cowley. |
|--|---------|

| | |
|--|--|
| His moral pleases, not his pointed wit : | |
|--|--|

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Forgot his Epic, nay Pindaric art, | |
|------------------------------------|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| But still I love the language of his heart. | |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| "Yet surely, surely these were famous men ! | |
|---|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| What boy but hears the sayings of old Ben ? | |
|--|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| In all debates where critics bear a part, | |
|---|--|

| | |
|--|---------|
| Not one but nods, and talks of Jonson's art, | Jonson. |
|--|---------|

| | |
|--|-------------------|
| Of Shakespeare's nature, and of Cowley's wit ; | Shake- speare. |
|--|-------------------|

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| How Beaumont's judgment check'd what Fletcher writ ; | Beaumont and Fletcher. |
|---|------------------------------|

| | |
|---|-----------|
| How Shadwell hasty, Wycherly was slow ; | Shadwell. |
|---|-----------|

| | |
|--|-----------|
| But for the passions, Southerne sure, and Rowe ! | Wycherly. |
|--|-----------|

| | |
|---|------------|
| These, only these, support the crowded stage, | Southerne. |
|---|------------|

| | |
|--|-------|
| From eldest Heywood down to Cibber's age." | Rowe. |
|--|-------|

| | |
|---|--|
| All this may be ; the people's voice is odd ; | |
|---|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| It is, and it is not, the voice of God. | |
|---|--|

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| To Gammer Gurton if it give the bays, | |
|---------------------------------------|--|

| | |
|---|---------|
| And yet deny the Careless Husband praise, | Cibber. |
|---|---------|

| | |
|---|--|
| Or say our fathers never broke a rule ; | |
|---|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| Why then, I say, the public is a fool. | |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| But let them own that greater faults than we | |
|--|--|

Spenser. They had, and greater virtues, I'll agree.
 Spenser himself affects the obsolete,
 Sidney. And Sidney's verse halts ill on Roman feet ;
 Milton. Milton's strong pinion now not heaven can bound,
 Now, serpent-like, in prose he sweeps the ground ;
 In quibbles angel and archangel join,
 And God the Father turns a school-divine.
 Not that I'd lop the beauties from his book,
 Like slashing Bentley with his desperate hook ;
 Or damn all Shakespeare, like the affected fool
 At Court, who hates whate'er he read at school.

Sprat, Carew and Sedley. BUT for the wits of either Charles's days,
 The mob of gentlemen who write with ease ;
 Sprat, Carew, Sedley, and a hundred more,
 (Like twinkling stars the Miscellanies o'er,)
 One smile that solitary shines
 In the dry desert of a thousand lines,
 Or lengthen'd thought, that gleams through many
 a page,
 Has sanctified whole poems for an age.
 I lose my patience, and I own it too,
 When works are censured, not as bad, but new ;
 While, if our elders break all reason's laws,
 These fools demand not pardon, but applause.

Shake- ON Avon's bank, where flowers eternal blow,
 ~peare. If I but ask if any weed can grow,
 One tragic sentence if I dare deride,
 Which Betterton's grave action dignified,
 Or well-mouth'd Booth with emphasis proclaims,
 (Though but perhaps a muster-roll of names,)

How will our fathers rise up in a rage,
And swear all shame is lost in George's age !

OF little use the man you may suppose
Who says in verse what others say in prose ;
Yet let me show a poet's of some weight,
And (though no soldier) useful to the state.
What will a child learn sooner than a song ?
What better teach a foreigner the tongue ?
What's long or short, each accent where to place,
And speak in public with some sort of grace ?
I can scarce think him such a worthless thing,
Unless he praise some monster of a king ;
Or virtue or religion turn to sport,
To please a lewd or unbelieving Court.
Unhappy Dryden !—In all Charles' days
Roscommon only boasts unspotted bays ;
And in our own (excuse some courtly stains)
No whiter page than Addison remains :
He from the taste obscene reclaims our youth,
And sets the passions on the side of truth,
Forms the soft bosom with the gentlest art,
And pours each human virtue in the heart.
Let Ireland tell how wit upheld her cause,
Her trade supported, and supplied her laws ;
And leave on Swift this grateful verse engraved,
" The rights a Court attack'd, a poet saved."
Behold the hand that wrought a nation's cure,
Stretch'd to relieve the idiot and the poor ;
Proud vice to brand, or injured worth adorn,
And stretch the ray to ages yet unborn.

Dryden.

Roscommon.

Addison.

Swift.

WE conquer'd France, but felt our captive's
 charms ;
 Her arts victorious triumph'd o'er our arms ;
 Britain to soft refinement less a foe,
 Wit grew polite, and numbers learn'd to flow.
 Waller and Dryden. Waller was smooth ; but Dryden taught to join
 The varying verse, the full resounding line,
 The long majestic march, and energy divine :
 Though still some traces of our rustic vein
 And splay-foot verse remain'd and will remain.
 Late, very late, correctness grew our care,
 When the tired nation breath'd from civil war.
 Exact Racine and Corneille's noble fire
 Show'd us that France had something to admire.
 Not but the tragic spirit was our own,
 Shakespeare and Otway. And full in Shakespeare, fair in Otway, shone ;
 But Otway fail'd to polish or refine,
 And fluent Shakespeare scarce effaced a line.
 Dryden. E'en copious Dryden wanted, or forgot,
 The last and greatest art,—the art to blot.
 Some doubt if equal pains or equal fire
 The humbler muse of comedy require.
 But in known images of life I guess
 The labour greater, as the indulgence less.
 Observe how seldom e'en the best succeed :
 Congreve. Tell me if Congreve's fools are fools indeed ?
 Farquhar. What pert low dialogue has Farquhar writ !
 Vanbrugh. How Van wants grace, who never wanted wit !
 Aphra Behn. The stage how loosely does Astræa tread,
 Who fairly puts all characters to bed !

'From The Dunciad. [1728

HERE lay poor Fletcher's half-eat scenes, and here Fletcher
 The frippery of crucified Molière ;
 There hapless Shakespeare, yet of Tibbald sore, Shake-
 Wish'd he had blotted for himself before. speare.
 The rest on outside merit but presume,
 Or serve (like other fools) to fill a room ;
 Such with their shelves as due proportion hold,
 Or their fond parents dress'd in red and gold ;
 Or where the pictures for the page atone,
 And Quarles is saved by beauties not his own. Quarles.

O THOU ! whatever title please thine ear, Swift.
 Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver !
 Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
 Or laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy chair,
 Or praise the court, or magnify mankind,
 Or thy grieved country's copper chains unbind ;
 From thy Bœotia though her power retires,
 Mourn not, my Swift ! at ought our realm requires,
 Here pleased behold her mighty wings outspread
 To hatch a new Saturnian age of lead.

From An Epistle to the Earl of Oxford,
 prefixed to Parnell's poems. [1721

SUCH were the notes thy once loved poet sung, Parnell
 Till death untimely stopp'd his tuneful tongue.
 O, just beheld and lost ! admired and mourn'd !
 With softest manners, gentlest arts adorn'd !
 Bless'd in each science ! bless'd in every strain !
 Dear to the Muse ! to Harley dear—in vain !

[1732

Epitaph on Gay in Westminster Abbey.

OF manners gentle, of affections mild ;
In wit a man ; simplicity a child :
With native humour tempering virtuous rage,
Form'd to delight at once and lash the age :
Above temptation in a low estate,
And uncorrupted e'en among the great :
A safe companion and an easy friend,
Unblamed through life, lamented in thy end.
These are thy honours ! not that here thy bust
Is mix'd with heroes, or with kings thy dust :
But that the worthy and the good shall say,
"Striking their pensive bosoms—" *Here lies Gay.*"

PARNELL.

To Mr. Pope.

To praise, yet still with due respect to praise,
A bard triumphant in immortal bays,
The learn'd to show, the sensible commend,
Yet still preserve the province of the friend,
What life, what vigour, must the lines require !
What music tune them ! what affection fire !

O might thy genius in my bosom shine !
Thou should'st not fail of numbers worthy thine,
The brightest ancients might at once agree
To sing within my lays, and sing of thee.

Horace himself would own thou dost excel
In candid arts to play the critic well.

Ovid himself might wish to sing the dame
Whom Windsor forest sees a gliding stream ;
On silver feet, with annual osier crown'd,
She runs for ever through poetic ground.

How flame the glories of Belinda's hair,
Made by thy Muse the envy of the fair ;
Less shone the tresses Egypt's princess wore,
Which sweet Callimachus so sung before.
Here courtly trifles set the world at odds,
Belles war with beaux, and whims descend for
 gods.

The new machines in names of ridicule,
Mock the grave phrenzy of the chymic fool ;
But know, ye fair, a point conceal'd with art,
The Sylphs and Gnomes are but a woman's heart :
The Graces stand in sight ; a Satyr train
Peep o'er their heads, and laugh behind the
 scene.

In Fame's fair temple, o'er the boldest wits
Inshrined on high the sacred Virgil sits,
And sings in measures, such as Virgil's muse
To place thee near him might be found to choose.
How might he tune the alternate reed with thee,
Perhaps a Strephon thou, a Daphnis he,
While some old Damon o'er the vulgar wise,
Thinks he deserves, and thou deserv'st the prize !
Rapt with the thought my fancy seeks the plains,
And turns me shepherd while I hear the strains.

Indulgent nurse of every tender gale,
Parent of flowerets, old Arcadia, hail !
Here in the cool my limbs at ease I spread,
Here let thy poplars whisper o'er my head ;
Still slide thy waters soft among the trees,
Thy aspens quiver in a breathing breeze ;
Smile all thy valleys in eternal spring,
Be hush'd, ye winds ! while Pope and Virgil sing.

In English lays, and all sublimely great,
Thy Homer warms with all his ancient heat ;
He shines in council, thunders in the fight,
And flames with every sense of great delight.
Long has that poet reign'd, and long unknown,
Like monarchs sparkling on a distant throne ;
In all the majesty of Greek retired,
Himself unknown, his mighty name admired ;
His language failing, wrapt him round with night,
Thine, raised by thee, recalls the work to light.
So wealthy mines, that ages long before
Fed the large realms around with golden ore,
When choked by sinking banks, no more appear,
And shepherds only say, the mines were here !
Should some rich youth, if nature warm his heart,
And all his project stand inform'd with art,
Here clear the caves, there ope the leading vein ;
The mines detected, flame with gold again.

How vast, how copious are thy new designs !
How every music varies in thy lines !
Still as I read, I feel my bosom beat,
And rise in raptures by another's heat.

Thus in the wood, when summer dress'd the
days,
When Windsor lent us tuneful hours of ease,
Our ears the lark, the thrush, the turtle blest,
And Philomela, sweetest o'er the rest :
The shades resound with song—O softly tread !
While a whole season warbles round my head.

This to my friend—and when a friend inspires,
My silent harp its master's hand requires,
Shakes off the dust, and makes these rocks resound,
For fortune placed me in unfertile ground ;
Far from the joys that with my soul agree,
From wit, from learning—far, O far from thee !
Here moss-grown trees expand the smallest leaf,
Here half an acre's corn is half a sheaf ;
Here hills with naked heads the tempest meet,
Rocks at their side, and torrents at their feet ;
Or lazy lakes, unconscious of a flood,
Whose dull brown Naiads ever sleep in mud.

Yet here content can dwell, and learned ease,
A friend delight me, and an author please ;
Even here I sing, while Pope supplies the theme,
Show my own love, though not increase his fame.

SWIFT.

From On the Death of Dr. Swift. [1731

WHAT poet would not grieve to see
His brother write as well as he ?
But rather than they should excel,

Would wish his rivals all in hell ?

Her end when Emulation misses,
She turns to Envy, stings and hisses :
The strongest friendship yields to pride,
Unless the odds be on our side.
Vain human kind ! fantastic race !
Thy various follies who can trace ?
Self-love, ambition, envy, pride,
Their empire in our hearts divide.
Give others riches, power, and station,
'Tis all on me a usurpation.

I have no title to aspire ;

Yet, when you sink, I seem the higher

Pope.

In Pope I cannot read a line,
But with a sigh I wish it mine ;
When he can in one couplet fix
More sense than I can do in six ;
It gives me such a jealous fit,
I cry, " Pox take him and his wit ! "

Gay

I grieve to be outdone by Gay
In my own humorous biting way.

Arbuthnot.

Arbuthnot is no more my friend,
Who dares to irony pretend,
Which I was born to introduce,
Refined it first and show'd its use.
St. John, as well as Pulteney, knows
That I had some repute for prose ;
And, till they drove me out of date,
Could maul a minister of state.
If they have mortified my pride,
And made me throw my pen aside ;
If with such talents Heaven has bless'd 'em,
Have I not reason to detest 'em ?

SUPPOSE me dead ; and then suppose
 A club assembled at the Rose ;
 Where, from discourse of this or that,
 I grow the subject of their chat.
 And while they toss my name about,
 With favour some, and some without,
 One, quite indifferent in the cause,
 My character impartial draws :

“ The Dean, if we believe report,
 Was never ill-received at court.
 As for his works in verse and prose,
 I own myself no judge of those ;
 Nor can I tell what critics thought 'em :
 But this I know, all people bought 'em.
 As with a moral view design'd
 To cure the vices of mankind ·
 His vein, ironically grave,
 Exposed the fool, and lash'd the knave.
 To steal a hint was never known,
 But what he writ was all his own.

Swift.

* * * * *

Perhaps I may allow the Dean
 Had too much satire in his vein ;
 And seem'd determined not to starve it,
 Because no age could more deserve it.
 Yet malice never was his aim ;
 He lash'd the vice, but spared the name ;
 No individual could resent,
 Where thousands equally were meant ;
 His satire points at no defect,
 But what all mortals may correct ;
 For he abhorr'd that senseless tribe
 Who call it humour when they gibe :

He spared a hump, or crooked nose,
 Whose owners set not up for beaux.
 True genuine dulness moved his pity,
 Unless it offer'd to be witty.
 Those who their ignorance confest,
 He ne'er offended with a jest ;
 But laugh'd to hear an idiot quote
 A verse from Horace learn'd by rote."

[1729

*From A Libel on the Reverend Dr. Delany
 and His Excellency John Lord Carteret.*

Pope

HAIL, happy Pope ! whose generous mind
 Detesting all the statesman kind,
 Contemning courts, at courts unseen,
 Refused the visits of a queen.
 A soul with every virtue fraught,
 By sages, priests, or poets taught ;
 Whose filial piety excels
 Whatever Grecian story tells ;
 A genius for all stations fit,
 Whose meanest talent is his wit :
 His heart too great, though fortune little,
 To lick a rascal statesman's spittle ;
 Appealing to the nation's taste,
 Above the reach of want is placed :
 By Homer dead was taught to thrive,
 Which Homer never could alive ;
 And sits aloft on Pindus' head,
 Despising slaves that cringe for bread.

PERIOD V.

POETS OF THE
XVIIITH CENTURY.

JOHNSON TO BURNS.

JOHNSON.

From Prologue, spoken by Mr. Garrick
at the opening of the Theatre Royal
Drury Lane, 1747.

WHEN Learning's triumph o'er her barbarous foes
First rear'd the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose ;¹ Shake-
Each change of many-colour'd life he drew, speare.
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new :
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting Time toil'd after him in vain.
His powerful strokes presiding Truth impress'd,
And unresisted Passion storm'd the breast.

Then Jonson came, instructed from the school, Jonson.
To please in method, and invent by rule ;
His studious patience and laborious art,
By regular approach assail'd the heart :
Cold approbation gave the lingering bays,
For those who durst not censure, scarce could
praise.

A mortal born, he met the general doom,
But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.

The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame, Carolinians.
Nor wish'd for Jonson's art, or Shakespeare's flame.
Themselves they studied, as they felt they writ ;

Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.
 Vice always found a sympathetic friend ;
 They pleased their age, and did not aim to mend.
 Yet bards like these aspired to lasting praise,
 And proudly hoped to pimp in future days.
 Their cause was general, their supports were strong,
 Their slaves were willing, and their reign was long :
 Till Shame regain'd the post that Sense betray'd,
 And Virtue call'd Oblivion to her aid.

Then, crush'd by rules, and weaken'd as refined,
 For years the power of Tragedy declined ;
 From bard to bard the frigid caution crept,
 Till Declamation roar'd while Passion slept ;
 Yet still did Virtue deign the stage to tread,
 'Philosophy remain'd, though Nature fled.
 But forced at length, her ancient reign to quit,
 She saw great Faustus lay the ghost of Wit ;
 Exulting Folly hail'd the joyful day,
 And Pantomime and Song confirm'd her sway.

THOMSON.

From Summer.

[1727]

Sidney.

NOR can the Muse the gallant Sidney pass,
 The plume of war ! with early laurels crown'd,
 The lover's myrtle, and the poet's bay.

* * * * *

For lofty sense,

Creative fancy, and inspection keen

Through the deep windings of the human heart,

Is not wild Shakespeare thine and Nature's boast ?

Shake-
 speare.

Is not each great, each amiable Muse
 Of classic ages in thy Milton met? Milton.
 A genius universal as his theme ;
 Astonishing as Chaos, as the bloom
 Of blowing Eden fair, as Heaven sublime !
 Nor shall my verse that elder bard forget,
 The gentle Spenser, Fancy's pleasing son ; Spenser.
 Who, like a copious river, pour'd his song
 O'er all the mazes of enchanted ground :
 Nor thee, his ancient master, laughing sage,
 Chaucer, whose native manners-painting verse, Chaucer.
 Well moralized, shines through the gothic cloud
 Of time and language o'er thy genius thrown.

From The Castle of Indolence. [1748¹

A BARD here dwelt, more fat than bard beseems ; Thomson.
 Who, void of envy, guile, and lust of gain,
 On virtue still, and nature's pleasing themes,
 Pour'd forth his unpremeditated strain ;
 The world forsaking with a calm disdain,
 Here laugh'd he careless in his easy seat ;
 Here quaff'd, encircled with the joyous train,
 Oft moralizing sage : his ditty sweet
 He loathed much to write, ne cared to repeat.

AKENSIDE.

For a Statue of Chaucer at Woodstock. [1758

SUCH was old Chaucer ; such the placid mien
 Of him who first with harmony inform'd

The language of our fathers. Here he dwelt
 For many a cheerful day. These ancient walls
 Have often heard him, while his legends blithe
 He sang ; of love, or knighthood, or the wiles
 Of homely life : through each estate and age,
 The fashions and the follies of the world
 With cunning hand portraying. Though perchance
 From Blenheim's towers, O stranger, thou art come
 Glowing with Churchill's trophies ; yet in vain
 Dost thou applaud them, if thy breast be cold
 To him, this other hero ; who, in times
 Dark and untaught, began with charming verse
 To tame the rudeness of his native land.

COLLINS.

From Ode to Fear. [1747

Shake-
 speare.

O THOU, whose spirit most possess'd
 The sacred seat of Shakespeare's breast !
 By all that from the prophet broke,
 In thy divine emotions spoke ;
 Hither again thy fury deal,
 Teach me but once like him to feel :
 His cypress wreath my meed decree,
 And I, O Fear, will dwell with thee !

*From Ode to the Popular Superstitions of
 the Highlands of Scotland.* [1747

NOR need'st thou blush that such false themes
 engage

Thy gentle mind, of fairer stores possess ;
 For not alone they touch the village breast,
 But fill'd in elder time, the historic page.

There, Shakespeare's self with every garland
 crown'd,

Shake-
 speare.

Flew to those fairy climes his fancy sheen,

In musing hour ; his wayward sisters found,
 And with their terrors drest the magic scene.

From them he sung, when, 'mid his bold design,
 Before the Scot, afflicted, and aghast !

The shadowy kings of Banquo's fated line
 Through the dark cave in gloomy pageant pass'd.

THEN will I dress once more the faded bower,
 Where Jonson sat in Drummond's classic shade.

Jonson and
 Drummond

From On our late taste in Music. [1747

THE temper of our isle, though cold, is clear ;

And such our genius, noble though severe.

Our Shakespeare scorn'd the trifling rules of art,

But knew to conquer and surprise the heart !

In magic chains the captive thought to bind,

And fathom all the depths of human kind !

Shake-
 speare.

[1743

From Epistle to Sir Thos. Hanmer.

BUT Heaven, still various in its works, decreed

The perfect boast of time should last succeed.

The beauteous union must appear at length,

Of Tuscan fancy, and Athenian strength :

Shake-
 speare.

One greater Muse Eliza's reign adorn,
And e'en a Shakespear to her fame be born !

Yet ah ! so bright her morning's opening ray,
In vain our Britain hoped an equal day !
No second growth the western isle could bear,
At once exhausted with too rich a year.
Jonson. Too nicely Jonson knew the critic's part ;
Nature in him was almost lost in art.
Fletcher. Of softer mould the gentle Fletcher came,
The next in order, as the next in name ;
With pleased attention, 'midst his scenes we find
Each glowing thought that warms the female
mind ;
Each melting sigh, and every tender tear ;
The-lover's wishes, and the virgin's fear.
His every strain the Smiles and Graces own ;
But stronger Shakespear felt for man alone :
Drawn by his pen, our ruder passions stand
The unrivall'd picture of his early hand.

With gradual steps and slow, exacter France
Saw Art's fair empire o'er her shores advance :
By length of toil a bright perfection knew,
Correctly bold, and just in all she drew :
Till late Corneille, with Lucan's spirit fired,
Breathed the free strain, as Rome and he inspired :
And classic judgment gain'd to sweet Racine
The temperate strength of Maro's chaster line.

Shake-
spear. But wilder far the British laurel spread,
And wreaths less artful crown our poet's head.

Yet he alone to every scene could give
The historian's truth, and bid the manners live.
Waked at his call I view, with glad surprise,
Majestic forms of mighty monarchs rise.
There Henry's trumpets spread their loud alarms,
And laurel'd Conquest waits her hero's arms.
Here gentler Edward claims a pitying sigh,
Scarce born to honours and so soon to die !
Yet shall thy throne, unhappy infant, bring
No beam of comfort to the guilty king ;
The time shall come when Glos'ter's heart shall
 bleed,
In life's last hours, with horror of the deed ;
When dreary visions shall at last present
Thy vengeful image in the midnight tent :
Thy hand unseen the secret death shall bear,
Blunt the weak sword, and break the oppressive
 spear !

Where'er we turn, by Fancy charm'd, we find
Some sweet illusion of the cheated mind.
Oft, wild of wing, she calls the soul to rove
With humbler nature, in the rural grove ;
Where swains contented own the quiet scene,
And twilight fairies tread the circled green :
Dress'd by her hand, the woods and valleys smile,
And Spring diffusive decks the enchanted isle.

O, more than all in powerful genius blest,
Come, take thine empire o'er the willing breast !
Whate'er the wounds this youthful heart shall
 feel,
Thy songs support me, and thy morals heal !

There every thought the poet's warmth may raise,
There native music dwells in all the lays.
O might some verse with happiest skill persuade
Expressive Picture to adopt thine aid !
What wondrous draughts might rise from every
page !
What other Raphaels charm a distant age !

Methinks e'en now I view some free design,
Where breathing nature lives in every line :
Chaste and subdued the modest lights decay,
Steal into shades, and mildly melt away.
And see where Antony, in tears approved,
Guards the pale relics of the chief he loved :
O'er the cold corse the warrior seems to bend,
Deep sunk in grief, and mourns his murder'd
friend !
Still as they press, he calls on all around,
Lifts the torn robe, and points the bleeding wound.

But who is he, whose brows exalted bear
A wrath impatient, and a fiercer air ?
Awake to all that injured worth can feel,
On his own Rome he turns the avenging steel ;
Yet shall not war's insatiate fury fall
(So heaven ordains it) on the destin'd wall.
See the fond mother, 'midst the plaintive train,
Hung on his knees, and prostrate on the plain !
Touch'd to the soul, in vain he strives to hide
The son's affection, in the Roman's pride :
O'er all the man conflicting passions rise ;
Rage grasps the sword, while Pity melts the eyes.

[1747

From An Ode on the Poetical Character.

HIGH on some cliff, to heaven up-piled,
 Of rude access, of prospect wild,
 Where, tangled round the jealous steep,
 Strange shades o'erbrow the valleys deep,
 And holy Genii guard the rock,
 Its glooms embrown, its springs unlock,
 While on its rich ambitious head,
 An Eden, like his own, lies spread :
 I view that oak, the fancied glades among,
 By which as Milton lay, his evening ear,
 From many a cloud that dropp'd ethereal dew,
 Nigh spher'd in heaven, its native strains could
 hear ;
 On which that ancient trump he reach'd was
 hung :

Milton.

Thither oft, his glory greeting,
 From Waller's myrtle shades retreating,
 With many a vow from Hope's aspiring tongue,
 My trembling feet his guiding steps pursue ;
 In vain—such bliss to one alone,
 Of all the sons of soul was known ;
 And Heaven, and Fancy, kindred powers,
 Have now o'erturn'd the inspiring bowers ;
 Or curtain'd close such scene from every future
 view.

Waller.

Ode on the Death of Thomson. [1749

IN yonder grave a Druid lies,
 Where slowly winds the stealing wave ;

The year's best sweets shall duteous rise
To deck its poet's sylvan grave.

In yon deep bed of whispering reeds
His airy harp shall now be laid,
That he, whose heart in sorrow bleeds,
May love through life the soothing shade.

Then maids and youths shall linger here,
And while its sounds at distance swell,
Shall sadly seem in pity's ear
To hear the woodland pilgrim's knell.

Remembrance oft shall haunt the shore
When Thames in summer wreaths is drest,
And oft suspend the dashing oar,
To bid his gentle spirit rest !

And oft as ease and health retire
To breezy lawn, or forest deep,
The friend shall view yon whitening spire,
And 'mid the varied landscape weep.

But thou, who own'st that earthy bed,
Ah ! what will every dirge avail ;
Or tears, which love and pity shed,
That mourn beneath the gliding sail ?

Yet lives there one, whose heedless eye
Shall scorn thy pale shrine glimmering near ?
With him, sweet bard, may fancy die,
And joy desert the blooming year.

But thou, forlorn stream, whose sullen tide
No sedge-crown'd sisters now attend,
Now waft me from the green hill's side,
Whose cold turf hides the buried friend !

And see, the fairy valleys fade ;
Dun night has veil'd the solemn view !
Yet once again, dear parted shade,
Meek Nature's Child, again adieu !

The genial meads, assign'd to bless
Thy life, shall mourn thy early doom ;
Their hinds and shepherd-girls shall dress,
With simple hands, thy rural tomb.

Long, long, thy stone and pointed clay
Shall melt the musing Briton's eyes :
O ! vales and wild woods, shall he say,
In yonder grave your Druid lies !

GRAY.

From The Progress of Poesy. [1757

FAR from the sun and summer gale
In thy green lap was Nature's Darling laid,
What tune, where lucid Avon stray'd.

Shake-
speare.

To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face : the dauntless child
Stretch'd forth his little arms and smiled.
" This pencil take (she said) whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year :

Thine too these golden keys, immortal Boy !
 This can unlock the gates of joy ;
 Of horror that, and thrilling fears,
 Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears."

Milton.

Nor second He, that rode sublime
 Upon the seraph-wings of Extasy,
 The secrets of the abyss to spy.

He pass'd the flaming bounds of place and time :
 The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
 Where angels tremble while they gaze,
 He saw ; but blasted with excess of light,
 Closed his eyes in endless night.

Dryden.

Behold, where Dryden's less presumptuous car,
 Wide o'er the fields of glory bear
 Two coursers of ethereal race,
 With necks in thunder clothed, and long-resound-
 ing pace.

Hark, his hands the lyre explore !
 Bright-eyed Fancy, hovering o'er,
 Scatters from her pictured urn
 Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.
 But ah ! 'tis heard no more—

Gray.

O lyre divine ! what daring spirit
 Wakes thee now ? Tho' he inherit
 Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
 That the Theban eagle bear,
 Sailing with supreme dominion
 Thro' the azure deep of air :
 Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
 Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,
 With orient hues, unborrow'd of the sun :

Vet shall he mount and keep his distant way
 Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
 Beneath the Good how far—but far above the
 Great.

From The Bard. [1757

ALL hail, ye genuine kings, Britannia's issue,
 hail !

Girt with many a baron bold
 Sublime their starry fronts they rear ;
 And gorgeous dames and statesmen old
 In bearded majesty, appear.
 In the midst a form divine !
 Her eye proclaims her of the Briton-line ;
 Her lion-port, her awe-commanding face,
 Attemper'd sweet to virgin grace.
 What strings symphonious tremble in the air,
 What strains of vocal transport round her play.
 Hear from the grave, great Taliessin, hear ;
 They breathe a soul to animate thy clay.
 Bright Rapture calls, and soaring as she sings,
 Waves in the eye of heaven her many-colour'd
 wings.

The verse adorn again
 Fierce war, and faithful love,
 And truth severe, by fairy fiction drest.

Spenser.

In buskin'd measures move
 Pale grief, and pleasing pain,
 With horror, tyrant of the throbbing breast.

Shake-
 speare.

A voice, as of the cherub choir,

Milton.

Gales from blooming Eden bear ;
 And distant warblings lessen on my ear,
 That lost in long futurity expire.

Stanzas to Mr. Bentley.

IN silent gaze the tuneful choir among,
 Half-pleased, half-blushing, let the Muse admire,
 While Bentley leads her sister-art along,
 And bids the pencil answer to the lyre.

See, in their course, each transitory thought
 Fix'd by his touch a lasting essence take ;
 Each dream, in fancy's airy colouring wrought
 To local symmetry and life awake !

The tardy rhymes that used to linger on,
 To censure cold, and negligent of fame,
 In swifter measures animated run
 And catch a lustre from his genuine flame.

Ah ! could they catch his strength, his easy grace
 His quick creation, his unerring line ;
 The energy of Pope they might efface,
 And Dryden's harmony submit to mine.

Pope.
 Dryden.

But not to one in this benighted age
 Is that diviner inspiration given,
 That burns in Shakespeare's or in Milton's page
 The pomp and prodigality of heaven.

Shakespeare
 and Milton.

As when conspiring in the diamond's blaze,
 The meaner gems that singly charm the sight
 Together dart their intermingled rays,
 And dazzle with a luxury of light.

CHURCHILL.

From The Rosciad. [1761

"MAY not, (to give a pleasing fancy scope,
 And cheer a patriot heart with patriot hope)
 May not some great extensive genius raise
 The name of Britain 'bove Athenian praise ;
 And, whilst brave thirst of fame his bosom warms,
 Make England great in letters as in arms ?
 There may—there hath—and Shakespeare's muse
 aspires

Shake-
speare.

Beyond the reach of Greece ; with native fires
 Mounting aloft, he wings his daring flight,
 Whilst Sophocles below stands trembling at his
 height.

Why should we then abroad for judges roam,
 When abler judges we may find at home ?
 Happy in tragic and in comic powers,
 Have we not Shakespeare ? Is not Jonson ours ?
 For them, your natural judges, Britons, vote ;
 They'll judge like Britons, who like Britons wrote."

Shakespeare
and Jonson.

He said, and conquer'd. Sense resumed her
 sway,
 And disappointed pedants stalk'd away.
 Shakespeare and Jonson, with deserved applause,
 Joint judges were ordain'd to try the cause.

* * * * *

In the first seat, in robe of various dyes,
 A noble wildness flashing from his eyes,
 Sat Shakespeare. In one hand a wand he bore,
 For mighty wonders famed in days of yore ;

Shake-
speare.

The other held a globe, which to his will
 Obedient turn'd, and own'd the master's skill :
 Things of the noblest kind his genius drew,
 And look'd through Nature at a single view :
 A loose he gave to his unbounded soul,
 And taught new lands to rise, new seas to roll ;
 Call'd into being scenes unknown before,
 And passing Nature's bounds, was something more.

Jonson.

Next Jonson sat, in ancient learning train'd,
 His rigid judgment Fancy's flights restrain'd ;
 Correctly pruned each wild luxuriant thought,
 Mark'd out her course, nor spared a glorious fault :
 The book of man he read with nicest art,
 And ransack'd all the secrets of the heart ;
 Exerted penetration's utmost force,
 And traced each passion to its proper source ;
 Then, strongly mark'd, in liveliest colours drew,
 And brought each foible forth to public view :
 The coxcomb felt a lash in every word,
 And fools, hung out, their brother fools deterr'd.
 His comic humour kept the world in awe,
 And laughter frighten'd folly more than law.

From The Author. [1764

Spenser.

Is this the land, where on our Spenser's tongue,
 Enamour'd of his voice, Description hung ?

Jonson.

Where Jonson rigid Gravity beguiled,
 Whilst Reason through her critic fences smiled ?

Shake-
speare.

Where Nature listening stood whilst Shakespear
 play'd,
 And wonder'd at the work herself had made ?

* * * * *

Is this the land, where, in those worst of times,
 The hardy poet raised his honest rimes
 To dread rebuke, and bade Controlment speak
 In guilty blushes on the villain's cheek ;
 Bade Power turn pale, kept mighty rogues in awe,
 And made them fear the Muse, who fear'd not law ?

Marvell.

From The Apology. [1761

WALLER, whose praise succeeding bards rehearse,
 Parent of harmony in English verse,
 Whose tuneful Muse in sweetest accents flows,
 In couplets first taught straggling sense to close.

Waller

In polish'd numbers and majestic sound,
 Where shall thy rival, Pope ! be ever found ?
 But whilst each line with equal beauty flows,
 E'en excellence, unvaried, tedious grows.
 Nature, through all her works, in great degree,
 Borrows a blessing from variety.

Pope

Music itself her needful aid requires
 To rouse the soul, and wake our dying fires.
 Still in one key, the nightingale would tease ;
 Still in one key, not Brent would always please.

Here let me bend, great Dryden, at thy shrine,
 Thou dearest name to all the tuneful nine.
 What if some dull lines in cold order creep,
 And with his theme the poet seems to sleep ?
 Still, when his subject rises proud to view,
 With equal strength the poet rises too ;
 With strong invention, noblest vigour fraught,
 Thought still springs up and rises out of thought ;
 Numbers ennobling numbers in their course,
 In varied sweetness flow, in varied force ;

Dryden

The powers of genius and of judgment join,
And the whole Art of Poetry is thine.

[1763]

From An Epistle to William Hogarth.

Dryden

POOR Sigismunda ! what a fate is thine !
Dryden, the great high-priest of all the Nine,
Reviv'd thy name, gave what a Muse could give,
And in his numbers bade thy memory live ;
Gave thee those soft sensations which might move
And warm the coldest anchorite to love ;
Gave thee that virtue, which would curb desire,
Refine and consecrate love's headstrong fire ;
Gave thee those griefs, which made the Stoic feel,
And call'd compassion forth from hearts of steel ;
Gave thee that firmness, which our sex may shame,
And make man bow to woman's juster claim ;
So that our tears, which from compassion flow,
Seem to debase thy dignity of woe.
But, O, how much unlike ! how fallen ! how
changed !
How much from Nature and herself estranged !
How totally deprived of all the powers
To shew her feelings, and awaken ours,
Doth Sigismunda now devoted stand,
The helpless victim of a dauber's hand !

GOLDSMITH.

Epitaph on Dr. Parnell. [1768]

THIS tomb inscribed to gentle Parnell's name,
May speak our gratitude, but not his fame.

What heart but feels his sweetly moral lay,
 That leads to truth through pleasure's flowery way?
 Celestial themes confess'd his tuneful aid;
 And heaven, that lent him genius, was repaid.
 Needless to him the tribute we bestow,
 The transitory breath of fame below:
 More lasting rapture from his works shall rise,
 While converts thank their poet in the skies.

COWPER.

From Table Talk. [1782

AGES elapsed ere Homer's lamp appear'd,
 And ages ere the Mantuan swan was heard:
 To carry nature lengths unknown before,
 To give a Milton birth, ask'd ages more.
 Thus genius rose and set at order'd times,
 And shot a dayspring into distant climes,
 Ennobling every region that he chose;
 He sunk in Greece, in Italy he rose;
 And, tedious years of Gothic darkness pass'd
 Emerged all splendour in our isle at last.
 Thus lovely halcyons dive into the main,
 Then show far off their shining plumes again.

Milton.

From The Task. [1784

Milton, whose genius had angelic wings,
 And fed on manna!

Milton.

Stanzas

on the late indecent liberties taken with
the remains of Milton. [1790

“ME too, perchance, in future days,
The sculptured stone shall show,
With Paphian myrtle or with bays
Parnassian on my brow.

“But I, or ere that season come,
Escaped from every care,
Shall reach my refuge in the tomb,
And sleep securely there.”

Milton.

So sang, in Roman tone and style,
The youthful bard, ere long
Ordain'd to grace his native isle
With her sublimest song.

Who then but must conceive disdain,
Hearing the deed unblest
Of wretches who have dared profane
His dread sepulchral rest?

Ill fare the hands that heaved the stones
Where Milton's ashes lay,
That trembled not to grasp his bones
And steal his dust away!

O ill-requited bard! neglect
Thy living worth repaid,
And blind idolatrous respect,
As much affronts thee dead.

From The Task. [1784

No bard could please me but whose lyre was tuned
 To Nature's praises. Heroes and their feats
 Fatigued me, never weary of the pipe
 Of Tityrus, assembling, as he sang,
 The rustic throng beneath his favourite beech.
 Then Milton had indeed a poet's charms :
 New to my taste his paradise surpass'd
 The struggling efforts of my boyish tongue
 To speak its excellence. I danced for joy.
 I marvell'd much that, at so ripe an age
 As twice seven years, his beauties had then first
 Engaged my wonder ; and admiring still,
 And still admiring, with regret supposed
 The joy half lost, because not sooner found.
 There too, enamour'd of the life I loved,
 Pathetic in its praise, in its pursuit
 Determined, and possessing it at last
 With transports, such as favour'd lovers feel,
 I studied, prized, and wish'd that I had known
 Ingenious Cowley ! and though now reclaim'd
 By modern lights from an erroneous taste,
 I cannot but lament thy splendid wit
 Entangled in the cobwebs of the schools.
 I still revere thee, courtly though retired ;
 Though stretch'd at ease in Chertsey's silent bowers,
 Not unemploy'd ; and finding rich amends
 For a lost world in solitude and verse.

Milton.

Cowley

From An Epistle to Robert Lloyd. [1754

'TIS not that I design to rob
 Thee of thy birthright, gentle Bob,

Prior.

For thou art born sole heir, and single,
Of dear Mat Prior's easy jingle ;

* * * * *

That Matthew's numbers run with ease,
Each man of common sense agrees !
All men of common sense allow
That Robert's lines are easy too :
Where then the preference shall we place,
Or how do justice in this case ?
Matthew (says Fame) with endless pains
Smooth'd and refined the meanest strains ;
Nor suffer'd one ill-chosen rhyme
To escape him at the idlest time ;
And thus o'er all a lustre cast,
That while the language lives, shall last.
An't please your ladyship (quoth I),
For 'tis my business to reply ;
Sure so much labour, so much toil,
Bespeak at least a stubborn soil :
Theirs be the laurel-wreath decreed,
Who both write well, and write full speed !
Who throw their Helicon about
As freely as a conduit spout !
Friend Robert thus, like *chien sçavant*,
Lets fall a poem en passant,
Nor needs his genuine ore refine !
'Tis ready polish'd from the mine.

From Table Talk.

[1782]

Addison.

IN front of these came Addison. In him
Humour in holiday and sightly trim,
Sublimity and Attic taste combined,

To polish, furnish, and delight the mind.
 Then Pope, as harmony itself exact,
 In verse well-disciplined, complete, compact,
 Gave virtue and morality a grace,
 That, quite eclipsing pleasure's painted face,
 Levied a tax of wonder and applause,
 E'en on the fools that trampled on their laws.
 But he (his musical finesse was such,
 So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)

Pope.

Made poetry a mere mechanic art ;
 And every warbler has his tune by heart.
 Nature imparting her satiric gift,
 Her serious mirth, to Arbuthnot and Swift,
 With droll sobriety they raised a smile,
 At folly's cost, themselves unmoved the while.
 That constellation set, the world in vain
 Must hope to look upon their like again.

Swift.

A. Are we then left—B. Not wholly in the dark ;
 Wit now and then, struck smartly, shows a spark,
 Sufficient to redeem the modern race
 From total night and absolute disgrace.
 While servile trick and imitative knack
 Confine the million in the beaten track,
 Perhaps some courser, who disdains the road,
 Snuffs up the wind, and flings himself abroad.

Contemporaries all surpass'd, see one ;
 Short his career indeed, but ably run ;
 Churchill ; himself unconscious of his powers,
 In penury consumed his idle hours ;
 And, like a scatter'd seed at random sown,
 Was left to spring by vigour of his own.
 Lifted at length, by dignity of thought
 And dint of genius, to an affluent lot,

Churchill.

He laid his head in luxury's soft lap,
 And took, too often, there his easy nap.
 If brighter beams than all he threw not forth,
 'Twas negligence in him, not want of worth.
 Surly and slovenly, and bold and coarse,
 Too proud for art, and trusting in mere force,
 Spendthrift alike of money and of wit,
 Always at speed, and never drawing bit,
 He struck the lyre in such a careless mood,
 And so disdain'd the rules he understood,
 The laurel seem'd to wait on his command ;
 He snatch'd it rudely from the muses' hand.

Epitaph on Dr. Johnson. [1785

HERE Johnson lies—a sage by all allow'd,
 Whom to have bred may well make England proud,
 Whose prose was eloquence, by wisdom taught,
 The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought ;
 Whose verse may claim—grave, masculine and
 strong,
 Superior praise to the mere poet's song ;
 Who many a noble gift from heaven possess'd,
 And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
 O man, immortal by a double prize,
 By fame on earth—by glory in the skies !

BURNS.

From The Vision. [1786

Burns
 Thomson.

“THOU canst not learn, nor can I show,
 To paint with Thomson's landscape glow ;

Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
 With Shenstone's art ;
Or pour, with Gray, the melting flow
 Warm on the heart.

Shenstone
Gray.

“ Yet, all beneath the unrivalled rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows ;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
 His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows
 Adown the glade.

“ Then never murmur nor repine ;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine ;
And trust me, not Potosi's mine,
 Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
 A rustic bard.

“ To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan ;
Preserve the dignity of man,
 With soul erect ;
And trust the Universal Plan
 Will all protect.

“ And wear thou this ”—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head ;
The polish'd leaves, and berries red,
 Did rustling play ;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
 In light away.

Address to the Shade of Thomson,
on crowning his bust at Ednam,
Roxburghshire, with bays. [1791

WHILE cold-eyed Spring, a virgin coy,
Unfolds her verdant mantle sweet,
Or pranks the sod in frolic joy,
A carpet for her youthful feet :
While Summer, with a matron's grace,
Walks stately in the cooling shade,
And oft, delighted, loves to trace
The progress of the spiky blade :
While Autumn, benefactor kind,
With age's hoary honours clad
Surveys with self-approving mind
Each creature on his bounty fed :
While maniac Winter rages o'er
The hills whence classic Yarrow flows,
Rousing the turbid torrent's roar,
Or sweeping, wild, a waste of snows :
So long, sweet Poet of the year,
Shall bloom that wreath thou well hast won ;
While Scotia, with exulting tear,
Proclaims that Thomson was her son.

From An Epistle to John Lapraik,
an old Scottish Bard. [1785

BUT, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle fell,
Tho' rude an' rough,

Yet crooning to a body's sel',
Does weel eneugh.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like, by chance,
An' ha'e to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter ?
Whene'er my muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Burns.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang ?"
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools ;
If honest nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars ?
Ye'd better ta'en up spades an' shoals
Or knappin' hammers.

A set o' dull, conceited hashers,
Confuse their brains in college classes !
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak ;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek !

Gi'e me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire ;

Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, tho' hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

PERIOD VI.
POETS BORN IN THE
XVIIITH CENTURY.
WORDSWORTH TO LANDOR.

WORDSWORTH.

Edward VI. [1827

“SWEET is the holiness of Youth”—So felt Chaucer
Time-honour'd Chaucer speaking through that

Lay

By which the Prioress beguiled the way,
And many a pilgrim's rugged heart did melt.
Hadst thou, loved Bard ! whose spirit often dwelt
In the clear land of vision, but foreseen
King, child, and seraph, blended in the mien
Of pious Edward kneeling as he knelt
In meek and simple infancy, what joy
For universal Christendom had thrill'd
Thy heart ! what hopes inspired thy genius, skill'd
(O great Precursor, genuine morning Star)
The lucid shafts of reason to employ,
Piercing the Papal darkness from afar !

Sonnet. [1806

WINGS have we,—and as far as we can go
We may find pleasure : wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.

Dreams, books, are each a world ; and books we
 know,
 Are a substantial world, both pure and good :
 Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and
 blood,
 Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
 There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
 Matter wherein right voluble I am,
 To which I listen with a ready ear ;
 Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear,—
 The gentle Lady married to the Moor ;
 And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.

Shake-
 speare.
 Spenser.

From The Prelude. [1805

—SHEPHERDS were the men that pleased me first ;
 Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds,
 With arts and laws so temper'd, that their lives
 Left, even to us toiling in this late day,
 A bright tradition of the golden age ;
 Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses
 Sequester'd, handed down among *themselves*
 Felicity, in Grecian song renown'd ;
 Nor such as—when an adverse fate had driven,
 From house and home, the courtly band whose
 fortunes
 Enter'd, with Shakespeare's genius, the wild woods
 Of Arden—amid sunshine or in shade
 Cull'd the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours,
 Ere Phœbe sigh'd for the false Ganymede ;
 Or there where Perdita and Florizel
 Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King ;
 Nor such as Spenser fabled.

Shake-
 speare.

Spenser.

From Dedication to
The White Doe of Rylstone. [1807

IN trellis'd shed with clustering roses gay,
And Mary ! oft beside our blazing fire,
When years of wedded life were as a day
Whose current answers to the heart's desire,
Did we together read in Spenser's Lay
How Una, sad of soul—in sad attire,
The gentle Una of celestial birth,
To seek her Knight went wandering o'er the earth.

Spenser.

Ah, then, Belovèd ! pleasing was the smart,
And the tear precious in compassion shed
For Her, who, pierced by sorrow's thrilling dart
Did meekly bear the pang unmerited ;
Meek as that emblem of her lowly heart
The milk-white Lamb which in a line she led,—
And faithful, loyal in her innocence,
Like the brave Lion slain in her defence.

Notes could we hear as of faery shell
Attuned to words with sacred wisdom fraught ;
Free Fancy prized each specious miracle,
And all its finer inspiration caught ;
Till in the bosom of our rustic cell,
We by a lamentable change were taught
That " bliss with mortal man may not abide."
How nearly joy and sorrow are allied !

For us the stream of fiction ceased to flow,
For us the voice of melody was mute.
—But, as soft gales dissolve the dreary snow,

And give the timid herbage leave to shoot,
Heaven's breathing influence fail'd not to bestow
A timely promise of unlook'd-for fruit,
Fair fruit of pleasure and serene content
From blossoms wild of fancies innocent.

It sooth'd us—it beguiled us—then, to hear
Once more of troubles wrought by magic spell ;
And griefs whose aery motion comes not near
The pangs that tempt the Spirit to rebel :
Then, with mild Una in her sober cheer,
High over hill, and low adown the dell
Again we wander'd, willing to partake
All that she suffer'd for her dear Lord's sake.

1802.

Milton.

MILTON ! thou should'st be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee : she is a fen
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
O, raise us up, return to us again !
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart ;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea :
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

From The Excursion. [1814

AMONG the hills

He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,
The divine Milton.

Milton.

From Lines written in a blank leaf of
Macpherson's Ossian. [1824

HAIL, Bards of mighty grasp ! on you
I chiefly call, the chosen Few,
Who cast not off the acknowledged guide,
Who falter'd not, nor turn'd aside ;
Whose lofty genius could survive
Privation, under sorrow thrive ;
In whom the fiery Muse revered
The symbol of a snow-white beard,
Bedew'd with meditative tears
Dropp'd from the lenient cloud of years.

Brothers in soul ! though distant times
Produced you nursed in various climes,
Ye, when the orb of life had waned,
A plenitude of love retain'd :
Hence, while in you each sad regret
By corresponding hope was met,
Ye linger'd among human kind,
Sweet voices for the passing wind ;
Departing sunbeams, loth to stop,
Though smiling on the last hill top !
Such to the tender-hearted maid
Even ere her joys begin to fade ;
Such haply, to the rugged chief

By fortune crush'd or tamed by grief;
 Appears, on Morven's lonely shore,
 Dim-gleaming through imperfect lore
 The Son of Fingal; such was blind
 Mæonides of ampler mind;
 Milton. Such Milton, to the fountain head
 Of glory by Urania led!

From The Prelude. [1799—1805]

BESIDE the pleasant Mill of Trompington
 Chaucer. I laugh'd with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade;
 Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
 Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard,
 Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State—
 Spenser. Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
 With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
 I call'd him Brother, Englishman, and Friend!
 Milton. Yea, our blind Poet, who in his later day,
 Stood almost single; uttering odious truth—
 Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,
 Soul awful—if the earth has ever lodged
 An awful soul—I seemed to see him here
 Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
 Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—
 A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
 Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
 And conscious step of purity and pride.

Sonnet.

[1827]

SCORN not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frown'd,
 Mindless of its just honours; with this key

Shakespeare unlock'd his heart ; the melody
 Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound ;
 A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound ;
 With it C  mo  ns sooth'd an exile's grief ;
 The Sonnet glitter'd a gay myrtle leaf
 Amid the cypress with which Dante crown'd
 His visionary brow : a glow-worm lamp,
 It cheer'd mild Spenser, call'd from Faery-land
 To struggle through dark ways ; and, when a damp
 Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
 The Thing became a trumpet ; whence he blew
 Soul-animating strains—alas, too few !

Shake-
 speare.

Spenser.

Milton.

Inscription for a Seat in the Groves of

Cole-Orton. [1838

BENEATH yon eastern ridge, the craggy bound,
 Rugged and high, of Charnwood's forest ground
 Stand yet, but, Stranger ! hidden from thy view,
 The ivied ruins of forlorn Grace-Dieu ;
 Erst a religious House, which day and night
 With hymns resounded, and the chanted rite :
 And when those rites had ceased, the Spot gave
 birth

To honourable Men of various worth :
 There, on the margin of a streamlet wild,
 Did Francis Beaumont sport, an eager child ;
 There, under shadow of the neighbouring rocks,
 Sang youthful tales of shepherds and their flocks ;
 Unconscious prelude to heroic themes,
 Heart-breaking tears, and melancholy dreams
 Of slighted love, and scorn, and jealous rage,
 With which his genius shook the buskin'd stage.

Beaumont.

Communities are lost, and empires die,
 And things of holy use unhallow'd lie ;
 They perish ; but the Intellect can raise,
 From airy words alone, a Pile that ne'er decays.

To the Poet, John Dyer. [1810-15

BARD of the Fleece, whose skilful genius made
 That work a living landscape fair and bright ;
 Nor hallow'd less with musical delight
 Than those soft scenes through which thy child-
 hood stray'd,
 Those southern tracts of Cambria, ' deep embay'd,
 With green hills fenced, with ocean's murmur
 lull'd ;'
 Though hasty Fame hath many a chaplet cull'd
 For worthless brows, while in the pensive shade
 Of cold neglect she leaves thy head ungraced,
 Yet pure and powerful minds, hearts meek and still,
 A grateful few, shall love thy modest Lay,
 Long as the shepherd's bleating flock shall stray
 O'er naked Snowdon's wild aerial waste ;
 Long as the thrush shall pipe on Grongar Hill !

From Liberty. [1829

Cowley.
 IN a deep vision's intellectual scene,
 Such earnest longings and regrets as keen
 Depress'd the melancholy Cowley, laid
 Under a fancied yew-tree's luckless shade ;
 A doleful bower for penitential song,
 Where Man and Muse complain'd of mutual
 wrong ;

While Cam's ideal current glided by,
And antique towers nodded their foreheads high,
Citadels dear to studious privacy.
But Fortune, who had long been used to sport
With this tried Servant of a thankless Court,
Relenting met his wishes ; and to you
The remnant of his days at least was true ;
You, whom, though long deserted, he loved best ;
You, Muses, books, fields, liberty, and rest !

Remembrance of Collins. [1789

GLIDE gently, thus for ever glide,
O Thames ! that other bards may see
As lovely visions by thy side
As now, fair river ! come to me.
O glide, fair stream ! for ever so,
Thy quiet soul on all bestowing,
Till all our minds for ever flow
As thy deep waters now are flowing.

Vain thought !—Yet be as now thou art,
That in thy waters may be seen
The image of a poet's heart,
How bright, how solemn, how serene !
Such as did once the Poet bless,
Who murmuring here a later ditty,
Could find no refuge for distress
But in the milder grief of pity.

Collins.

Now let us, as we float along,
For *him* suspend the dashing oar ;
And pray that never child of song
May know that Poet's sorrows more.

How calm ! how still ! the only sound,
 The dripping of the oar suspended !
 —The evening darkness gathers round
 By virtue's holiest powers attended.

[1807]

From Resolution and Independence.

Chatterton. I THOUGHT of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
 The sleepless Soul that perish'd in his pride ;
 Burns. Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
 Following his plough, along the mountain-side :
 We Poets in our youth begin in gladness ;
 But thereof come in the end despondency and
 madness.

At the Grave of Burns,
 Seven years after his death. [1803]

I.

I SHIVER, Spirit fierce and bold,
 At thought of what I now behold :
 As vapours breathed from dungeons cold
 Strike pleasure dead,
 So sadness comes from out the mould
 Where Burns is laid.

And have I then thy bones so near,
 And thou forbidden to appear ?
 As if it were thyself that 's here
 I shrink with pain ;
 And both my wishes and my fear
 Alike are vain.

Off weight—nor press on weight !—away
 Dark thoughts !—they came, but not to stay ;

With chasten'd feelings would I pay
 The tribute due
 To him, and aught that hides his clay
 • From mortal view.

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
 He sang, his genius 'glinted' forth,
 Rose like a star that touching earth,
 For so it seems,
 Doth glorify its humble birth
 With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
 The struggling heart, where be they now?
 Full soon the Aspirant of the plough,
 The prompt, the brave,
 Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
 And silent grave.

I mourn'd with thousands, but as one
 More deeply grieved, for He was gone
 Whose light I hail'd when first it shone,
 And show'd my youth
 How Verse may build a princely throne
 On humble truth.

Alas ! where'er the current tends,
 Regret pursues, and with it blends,—
 Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
 By Skiddaw seen,—
 Neighbours we were, and loving friends
 We might have been ;

True friends though diversely inclined ;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibres are entwined,
 Through Nature's skill,
May even by contraries be join'd
 More closely still.

The tear will start, and let it flow ;
Thou "poor Inhabitant below,"
At this dread moment—even so—
 Might we together
Have sate and talk'd where gowans blow,
 Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed
within my reach ; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast !
 But why go on ?
Oh ! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
 His grave grass-grown.

There too, a Son, his joy and pride,
(Not three weeks past the Stripling died),
Lies gather'd to his Father's side,
 Soul-moving sight !
Yet one to which is not denied
 Some sad delight.

For *he* is safe, a quiet bed
Hath early found among the dead,
Harbour'd where none can be misled,
 Wrong'd, or distrest ;
And surely here it may be said
 That such are blest.

And O for Thee, by pitying grace
 Check'd oftentimes in a devious race,
 May He who halloweth the place
 • Where Man is laid,
 Receive thy Spirit in the embrace
 For which it pray'd !

Sighing I turn'd away ; but ere
 Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear,
 Music that sorrow comes not near,
 A ritual hymn,
 Chaunted in love that casts out fear
 By Seraphim.

II.

1803

Too frail to keep the lofty vow
 That must have follow'd when his brow
 Was wreath'd—"The Vision" tells us how—
 With holly spray,
 He falter'd, drifted to and fro,
 And pass'd away.

Burns.

Well might such thoughts, dear Sister, throng
 Our minds when, lingering all too long,
 Over the grave of Burns we hung
 In social grief—
 Indulged as if it were a wrong
 To seek relief.

But, leaving such unquiet theme
 Where gentlest judgments may misdeem,

And prompt to welcome every gleam
Of good and fair,
Let us beside this limpid Stream
Breathe hopeful air.

Enough of sorrow, wreck and blight ;
Think rather of those moments bright
When to the consciousness of right
His course was true,
When Wisdom prosper'd in his sight
And virtue grew.

Yes, freely let our hearts expand,
Freely as in youth's season bland,
When side by side, his Book in hand,
We wont to stray,
Our pleasure varying at command
Of each sweet Lay.

How oft inspired must he have trod
These pathways, yon far-stretching road !
There lurks his home ; in that Abode,
With mirth elate,
Or in his nobly-pensive mood,
The Rustic sate.

Proud thoughts that Image overawes,
Before it humbly let us pause,
And ask of Nature, from what cause
And by what rules
She train'd her Burns to win applause
That shames the Schools.

Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen ;
He rules 'mid winter snows, and when
 Bees fill their hives ;
Deep in the general heart of men
 His power survives.

What need of fields in some far clime
Where Heroes, Sages, Bards sublime,
And all that fetch'd the flowing rhyme
 From genuine springs,
Shall dwell together till old Time
 Folds up his wings ?

Sweet Mercy ! to the gates of Heaven
This Minstrel lead, his sins forgiven ;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven
 With vain endeavour,
And memory of Earth's bitter leaven,
 Effaced for ever.

But why to Him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail heart the purest share
 With all that live ?
The best of what we do and are,
 Just God, forgive !

Sonnet.

[1833

“THERE !” said a Stripling, pointing with meet
 pride
Towards a low roof with green trees half conceal'd,
“Is Mossgiel Farm ; and that's the very field

Burns

Where Burns plough'd up the Daisy." Far and
wide

A plain below stretch'd seaward, while, descried
Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose ;
And, by that simple notice, the repose
Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified.
Beneath ' the random field of clod or stone '
Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower
Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour
Have pass'd away ; less happy than the One
That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove
The tender charm of poetry and love.

Inscription on Southey's Monument
in Crosthwaite Church, Keswick.

YE vales and hills whose beauty hither drew
The poet's steps, and fix'd him here, on you,
His eyes have closed ! And ye, loved books, no
more
Shall Southey feed upon your precious lore,
To works that ne'er shall forfeit their renown,
Adding immortal labours of his own—
Whether he traced historic truth, with zeal
For the State's guidance, or the Church's weal,
Or Fancy, disciplined by studious art,
Inform'd his pen, or wisdom of the heart,
Or judgments sanction'd in the patriot's mind
By reverence for the rights of all mankind.
Wide were his aims, yet in no human breast
Could private feelings meet for holier rest.
His joys, his griefs, have vanish'd like a cloud
From Skiddaw's top ; but he to heaven was vow'd

Through his industrious life, and Christian faith
Calm'd in his soul the fear of change and death.

• *From The Prelude.* [1805

WITH such a theme,
Coleridge ! with this my argument, of thee Coleridge.
Shall I be silent ? O capacious Soul !
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of ?
Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way.

* * * * *

Whether to me shall be allotted life,
And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,
That will be deem'd no insufficient plea
For having given the story of myself,
Is all uncertain : but, belovèd Friend !
When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view
Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
That summer, under whose indulgent skies,
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Uncheck'd, or loiter'd 'mid her sylvan combs,
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel ;
And I, associate with such labour, steep'd
In soft forgetfulness the live-long hours,
Murmuring of him, who, joyous hap, was found,
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall ; or her who sate

In misery near the miserable Thorn;
 When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
 And hast before thee all which then we were,
 To thee, in memory of that happiness,*
 It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend !
 Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind
 Is labour not unworthy of regard :
 To thee the work shall justify itself.

Yarrow Re-visited. [1831

THE gallant youth, who may have gain'd,
 Or seeks, a 'winsome marrow,'
 Was but an infant in the lap
 When first I look'd on Yarrow ;
 Once more, by Newark's Castle-gate
 Long left without a warder,
 I stood, look'd, listen'd, and with Thee,
 Great Minstrel of the Border !

Grave thoughts ruled wide on that sweet day,
 Their dignity installing
 In gentle bosoms, while sere leaves
 Were on the bough, or falling ;
 But breezes play'd, and sunshine gleam'd—
 The forest to embolden ;
 Redden'd the fiery hues, and shot
 Transparence through the golden.

For busy thoughts the Stream flow'd on
 In foamy agitation ;
 And slept in many a crystal pool
 For quiet contemplation :

No public and no private care
The free-born mind enthralling,
We made a day of happy hours,
Our happy days recalling.

Brisk youth appear'd, the Morn of youth,
With freaks of graceful folly,—
Life's temperate Noon, her sober Eve,
Her Night not melancholy ;
Past, present, future, all appear'd
In harmony united,
Like guests that meet, and some from far,
By cordial love invited.

And if, as Yarrow, through the woods
And down the meadow ranging,
Did meet us with unalter'd face,
Though we were changed and changing ;
If, *then*, some natural shadows spread
Our inward prospect over,
The soul's deep valley was not slow
Its brightness to recover.

Eternal blessings on the Muse,
And her divine employment !
The blameless Muse, who trains her sons
For hope and calm enjoyment ;
Albeit sickness, lingering yet,
Has o'er their pillow brooded ;
And Care waylays their steps—a sprite
Not easily eluded.

For thee, O Scott ! compell'd to change
Green Eildon-Hill and Cheviot
For warm Vesuvio's vine-clad slopes ;
And leave thy Tweed and Teviot
For mild Sorrento's breezy waves ;
May classic Fancy, linking
With native Fancy her fresh aid
Preserve thy heart from sinking !

O ! while they minister to thee,
Each vying with the other,
May Health return to mellow Age
With Strength, her venturous brother ;
And Tiber, and each brook and rill
Renown'd in song and story,
With unimagined beauty shine,
Nor lose one ray of glory !

For thou, upon a hundred streams,
By tales of love and sorrow
Of faithful love, undaunted truth,
Hast shed the power of Yarrow ;
And streams unknown, hills yet unseen,
Wherever they invite thee,
At parent Nature's grateful call,
With gladness must requite thee.

A gracious welcome shall be thine,
Such looks of love and honour
As thy own Yarrow gave to me,
When first I gazed upon her ;

Beheld what I had fear'd to see,
Unwilling to surrender
Dreams treasured up from early days,
The holy and the tender.

And what, for this frail world, were all
That mortals do or suffer,
Did no responsive harp, no pen,
Memorial tribute offer?
Yea, what were mighty Nature's self?
Her features could they win us,
Unhelp'd by the poetic voice
That hourly speaks within us?

Nor deem that localized Romance
Play false with our affections;
Unsanctifies our tears—made sport
For fanciful dejections:
Ah, no! the visions of the past
Sustain the heart in feeling
Life as she is—our changeful Life,
With friends and kindred dealing.

Bear witness, Ye, whose thoughts that day
In Yarrow's groves were center'd;
Who through the silent portal arch
Of mouldering Newark enter'd;
And clomb the winding stair that once
Too timidly was mounted
By the 'Last Minstrel' (not the last!)
Ere he his Tale recounted.

Flow on for ever, Yarrow Stream !
Fulfil thy pensive duty,
Well pleased that future bards should chant
For simple hearts thy beauty ; •
To dream-light dear while yet unseen,
Dear to the common sunshine,
And dearer still, as now I feel,
To memory's shadowy moonshine !

On the departure of Sir Walter Scott
from Abbotsford for Naples. [1831

A TROUBLE, not of clouds, or weeping rain,
Nor of the setting sun's pathetic light
Engender'd, hangs o'er Eildon's triple height ;
Spirits of Power, assembled there, complain
For kindred Power departing from their sight ;
While Tweed, best pleased in chanting a blithe
strain,
Saddens his voice again, and yet again.
Lift up your hearts, ye Mourners ! for the might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes ;
Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue
Than sceptred king or laurell'd conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous Potentate. Be true,
Ye winds of ocean, and the midland sea,
Wafting your Charge to fair Parthenope !

Extempore Effusion upon the Death of
James Hogg. [1835

WHEN first, descending from the moorlands,
I saw the Stream of Yarrow glide
Along a bare and open valley,
The Ettrick Shepherd was my guide. Hogg.

When last along its banks I wander'd,
Through groves that had begun to shed
Their golden leaves upon the pathways,
My steps the Border-minstrel led. Scott.

The mighty Minstrel breathes no longer,
'Mid mouldering ruins low he lies;
And death upon the braes of Yarrow,
Has closed the Shepherd-poet's eyes :

Nor has the rolling year twice measured,
From sign to sign, its steadfast course,
Since every mortal power of Coleridge
Was frozen at its marvellous source ; Coleridge

The rapt One, of the godlike forehead,
The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth :
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle, Lamb.
Has vanish'd from his lonely hearth.

Like clouds that rake the mountain-summits,
Or waves that own no curbing hand,
How fast has brother follow'd brother,
From sunshine to the sunless land !

Yet I, whose lids from infant slumber
Were earlier raised, remain to hear
A timid voice, that asks in whispers,
“Who next will drop and disappear?”

Crabbe.

Our haughty life is crown'd with darkness,
Like London with its own black wreath,
On which with thee, O Crabbe! forth-looking
I gazed from Hampstead's breezy heath.

As if but yesterday departed,
Thou too art gone before; but why,
O'er ripe fruit, seasonably gather'd,
Should frail survivors heave a sigh?

Mrs.
Hemans.

Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,
Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep;
For Her who, ere her summer faded,
Has sunk into a breathless sleep.

No more of old romantic sorrows,
For slaughter'd Youth or love-lorn Maid!
With sharper grief is Yarrow smitten,
And Ettrick mourns with her their Poet dead.

COLERIDGE.

To William Wordsworth, [1807
 Composed on the night after his recitation
 of a Poem on the growth of an
 individual mind.

FRIEND of the wise ! and teacher of the good !
 Into my heart have I received that lay
 More than historic, that prophetic lay
 Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
 Of the foundations and the building up
 Of a Human Spirit thou hast dar'd to tell
 What may be told, to the understanding mind
 Revealeable ; and what within the mind
 By vital breathings secret as the soul
 Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the heart
 Thoughts all too deep for words !—

* * * * *
 An Orphic song indeed,
 A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
 To their own music chanted !

O great Bard !
 Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
 With steadfast eye I view'd thee in the choir
 Of ever-enduring men. The truly great
 Have all one age, and from one visible space
 Shed influence ! They, both in power and act,
 Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
 Save as it worketh for them, they in it.
 Nor less a sacred roll, than those of old,

Coleridge.

And to be placed, as they, with gradual fame
 Among the archives of mankind, thy work
 Makes audible a linked lay of Truth,
 Of truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
 Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes !
 Ah ! as I listen'd with a heart forlorn,
 The pulses of my being beat anew :
 And even as life returns upon the drown'd,
 Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
 Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
 Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart ;
 And fears self-will'd that shunn'd the eye of hope ;
 And hope that scarce would know itself from fear ;
 Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
 And genius given, and knowledge won in vain ;
 And all which I had cull'd in wood-walks wild,
 And all which patient toil had rear'd, and all,
 Commune with thee had open'd out—but flowers
 Strew'd on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
 In the same coffin, for the self-same grave !

SOUTHEY.

For a Tablet at Penshurst. [1799

ARE days of old familiar to thy mind,
 O Reader ? Hast thou let the midnight hour
 Pass unperceived, whilst thou in fancy lived
 With high-born beauties and enamour'd chiefs,
 Sharing their hopes, and with a breathless joy
 Whose expectation touch'd the verge of pain,
 Following their dangerous fortunes ? If such lore

Hath ever thrill'd thy bosom, thou wilt tread,
 As with a pilgrim's reverential thoughts,
 The groves of Penshurst. Sidney here was born. Sidney
 Sidney, than whom no gentler, braver man
 His own delightful genius ever feign'd,
 Illustrating the vales of Arcady
 With courteous courage and with loyal loves.
 Upon his natal day an acorn here
 Was planted : it grew up a stately oak,
 And in the beauty of its strength it stood
 And flourish'd, when his perishable part
 Had moulder'd, dust to dust. That stately oak
 Itself hath moulder'd now, but Sidney's fame
 Endureth in his own immortal works.

From Carmen Nuptiale. [1816

THAT wreath which in Eliza's golden days
 My master dear, divinest Spenser, wore, Spenser
 That which rewarded Drayton's learned lays, Drayton.
 Which thoughtful Ben and gentle Daniel bore. Jonson
 Grin, Envy, through thy ragged mask of scorn ! and
 In honour it was given, with honour it was worn ! Daniel.

But then my master dear arose to mind,
 He on whose song while yet I was a boy,
 My spirit fed, attracted to its kind,
 And still insatiate of the growing joy ; . . .
 He on whose tomb these eyes were wont to dwell,
 With inward yearnings which I may not tell ;

He whose green bays shall bloom for ever young,
 And whose dear name whenever I repeat,

Reverence and love are trembling on my tongue ;
Sweet Spenser, sweetest bard ; yet not more
sweet
Than pure was he, and not more pure than wise ;
High Priest of all the Muses' mysteries.

I call'd to mind that mighty master's song,
When he brought home his beautifullest bride,
And Mulla murmur'd her sweet undersong,
And Mole with all his mountain woods replied ;
Never to mortal lips a strain was given,
More rich with love, more redolent of Heaven.

His cup of joy was mantling to the brim,
Yet solemn thoughts enhanced his deep delight ;
A holy feeling fill'd his marriage hymn,
And Love aspired with Faith a heavenward flight.

SCOTT.

From Rokeby.

[1813]

Chaucer.

O, FOR that pencil, erst profuse
Of chivalry's emblazon'd hues,
That traced of old in Woodstock's bower,
The pageant of the Leaf and Flower,
And bodied forth the tourney high,
Held for the hand of Emily !
Then might I paint the tumult broad,
That to the crowded abbey flow'd
And pour'd as with an ocean's sound,

Into the church's ample bound !
 Then might I show each varying mien,
 Exulting, woeful, or serene ;
 Indifference, with his idiot stare,
 And Sympathy, with anxious air,
 Paint the dejected Cavalier.
 Doubtful, disarm'd, and sad of cheer ;
 And his proud foe, whose formal eye
 Claim'd conquest now and mastery ;
 And the brute crowd, whose envious zeal
 Huzzas each turn of fortune's wheel,
 And loudest shouts when lowest lie
 Exalted worth and station high.

No touch of childhood's frolic mood
 Show'd the elastic spring of blood ;
 Hour after hour he loved to pore
 On Shakespeare's rich and varied lore,
 But turn'd from martial scenes and light,
 From Falstaff's feast and Percy's fight,
 To ponder Jaques' moral strain,
 And muse with Hamlet, wise in vain ;
 And weep himself to soft repose
 O'er gentle Desdemona's woes.

Shake-
speare.

From Marmion.

[1808

NOT she, the Championess of old,
 In Spenser's magic tale enroll'd,
 She for the charmed spear renown'd,
 Which forced each knight to kiss the ground,—
 Not she more changed, when, placed at rest,

Spenser.

What time she was Malbecco's guest,
 She gave to flow her maiden vest ;
 When from the corslet's grasp relieved,
 Free to the sight her bosom heaved ;
 Sweet was her blue eye's modest smile,
 Erst hidden by the aventayle ;
 And down her shoulders graceful roll'd
 Her locks profuse, of paly gold.
 They who whilom, in midnight fight,
 Had marvell'd at her matchless might,
 No less her maiden charms approved,
 But looking liked, and liking loved.
 The sight could jealous pangs beguile,
 And charm Malbecco's cares awhile ;
 And he, the wandering Squire of Dames,
 Forgot his Columbella's claims,
 And passion, erst unknown, could gain
 The breast of blunt Sir Satyrane ;
 Nor durst light Paridel advance,
 Bold as he was, a looser glance.
 She charm'd, at once, and tamed the heart,
 Incomparable Britomart !

Spenser.
 Milton.
 Dryden.

THE mightiest chiefs of British song
 Scorn'd not such legends to prolong :
 They gleam through Spenser's elfin dream,
 And mix in Milton's heavenly theme ;
 And Dryden, in immortal strain,
 Had raised the Table Round again,
 But that a ribald King and Court
 Bade him toil on, to make them sport ;
 Demanded for their niggard pay,
 Fit for their souls, a looser lay,

Licentious satire, song, and play ;
 The world defrauded of the high design,
 Profaned the God-given strength, and marr'd the
 lofty line.

[1823

From Prelude to Macduff's Cross.

BUT mark,—a wizard born on Avon's bank,
 Tuned but his harp to this wild northern theme,
 And lo ! the scene is hallow'd. None shall pass,
 Now, or in after days, beside that stone,
 But he shall have strange visions ; thoughts and
 words,

Shake-
 speare.

That shake, or rouse, or thrill the human heart,
 Shall rush upon his memory when he hears
 The spirit-stirring name of this rude symbol ;—
 Oblivious ages, at that simple spell,
 Shall render back their terrors with their woes,
 Alas ! and with their crimes—and the proud
 phantoms
 Shall move with step familiar to his eye,
 And accents which, once heard, the ear forgets not,
 Though ne'er again to list them.

From The Bridal of Triermaine. [1813

BUT if thou bid'st, these tones shall tell
 Of errant knight, and damozelle ;
 Of the dread knot a wizard tied,
 In punishment of maiden's pride,
 In notes of marvel and of fear,
 That best may charm romantic ear.

Collins.

For Lucy loves,—like Collins, ill-starr'd name
 Whose lay's requital, was that tardy fame,
 Who bound no laurel round his living head,
 Should hang it o'er his monument when dead,—
 For Lucy loves to tread enchanted strand,
 And thread, like him, the maze of fairy land ;
 Of golden battlements to view the gleam,
 And slumber soft by some Elysian stream.

BYRON.

From Childe Harold. [1818

IN Venice Tasso's echoes are no more,
 And silent rows the songless gondolier ;
 Her palaces are crumbling to the shore,
 And music meets not always now the ear :
 Those days are gone—but Beauty still is here.
 States fall, arts fade—but Nature doth not die,
 Nor yet forget how Venice once was dear,
 The pleasant place of all festivity,
 The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy !

Shake-
speare.

Otway.

But unto us she hath a spell beyond
 Her name in story, and her long array
 Of mighty shadows, whose dim forms despond
 Above the dogeless city's vanish'd sway ;
 Ours is a trophy which will not decay
 With the Rialto ; Shylock and the Moor,
 And Pierre, can not be swept or worn away—
 The keystones of the arch ! though all were o'er,
 For us repeopled were the solitary shore.

•Churchill's Grave, [1816
A fact literally rendered.

I STOOD beside the grave of him who blazed
The comet of a season, and I saw
The humblest of all sepulchres, and gazed
With not the less of sorrow and of awe
On that neglected turf and quiet stone,
With name no clearer than the names unknown,
Which lay unread around it ; and I ask'd
The gardener of that ground, why it might be
That for this plant strangers his memory task'd
Through the thick deaths of half a century ;
And thus he answer'd—"Well, I do not know
Why frequent travellers turn to pilgrims so ;
He died before my day of sextonship,
And I had not the digging of this grave."
And is this all ? I thought,—and do we rip
The veil of Immortality ? and crave
I know not what of honour and of light
Through unborn ages, to endure this blight ?
So soon and so successful ? As I said,
The Architect of all on which we tread,
For Earth is but a tombstone, did essay
To extricate remembrance from the clay,
Whose minglings might confuse a Newton's thought
Were it not that all life must end in one,
Of which we are but dreamers ;—as he caught
As 'twere the twilight of a former Sun,
Thus spoke he,—“I believe the man of whom
You wot, who lies in this selected tomb,
Was a most famous writer in his day,
And therefore travellers step from out their way

To pay him honour,—and myself whate'er
 Your honour pleases,"—then most pleased I shook
 From out my pocket's avaricious nook
 Some certain coins of silver, which as 'twere
 Perforce I gave this man, though I could spare
 So much but inconveniently ;—ye smile,
 I see ye, ye profane ones ! all the while,
 Because my homely phrase the truth would tell.
 You are the fools, not I—for I did dwell
 With a deep thought and with a soften'd eye,
 On that old Sexton's natural homily,
 In which there was Obscurity and Fame,
 The Glory and the Nothing of a Name.

*From English Bards and Scotch
 Reviewers.* [1809

Pope

THEN should you ask me, why I venture o'er
 The path which Pope and Gifford trod before ;
 If not yet sicken'd you can still proceed :
 Go on ; my rhyme will tell you as you read.
 " But hold ! " exclaims a friend,—“ here's some
 neglect ;

Pope.

Dryden.

This—that—and t' other line seem incorrect.”
 What then ? The self-same blunder Pope has got,
 And careless Dryden—“ Ay, but Pye has not : ”—
 Indeed !—'tis granted, faith !—but what care I ?
 Better to err with Pope, than shine with Pye.

Time was, ere yet in these degenerate days
 Ignoble themes obtain'd mistaken praise,
 When sense and wit with poesy allied,
 No fabled graces, flourish'd side by side ;
 From the same fount their inspiration drew,
 And rear'd by taste, bloom'd fairer as they grew.

Then, in this happy isle, a Pope's pure strain
 Sought the rapt soul to charm, nor sought in vain ;
 A polish'd nation's praise aspired to claim,
 And raised the people's, as the poet's fame.
 Like him great Dryden pour'd the tide of song,
 In stream less smooth indeed, yet doubly strong.
 Then Congreve's scenes could cheer, or Otway's
 melt—

Pope.

Dryden.

Congreve
and
Otway.

For nature then an English audience felt.
 But why these names, or greater still, retrace,
 When all to feebler bards resign their place ?
 Yet to such times our lingering looks are cast,
 When taste and reason with those times are past.
 Now look around, and try each trifling page,
 Survey the precious works that please the age ;
 This truth at least let satire's self allow,
 No dearth of bards can be complain'd of now.
 The loaded press beneath her labour groans,
 And printer's devils shake their weary bones ;
 While Southey's epics cram the creaking shelves,
 And Little's lyrics shine in hot-press'd twelves.

Southey.
Moore.

* * * * *
 Behold in various throngs the scribbling crew,
 For notice eager, pass in long review :
 Each spurs his jaded Pegasus apace,
 And rhyme and blank maintain an equal race ;
 Sonnets on sonnets crowd, and ode on ode ;
 And tales of terror jostle on the road ;
 Immeasurable measures move along ;
 For simpering folly loves a varied song,
 To strange mysterious dulness still the friend,
 Admires the strain she cannot comprehend.
 Thus Lays of Minstrels—may they be the last !

Scott.

On half-strung harps whine mournful to the blast,
While mountain spirits prate to river sprites,
That dames may listen to the sound at nights ;
And goblin brats, of Gilpin Horner's brood,
Decoy young border-nobles through the wood,
And skip at every step, Lord knows how high,
And frighten foolish babes, the Lord knows why ;
While high-born ladies in their magic cell,
Forbidding knights to read who cannot spell,
Despatch a courier to a wizard's grave,
And fight with honest men to shield a knave.

Next view in state, proud prancing on his roan,
The golden-crested haughty Marmion,
Now forging scrolls, now foremost in the fight,
Not quite a felon, yet but half a knight,
The gibbet or the field prepared to grace ;
A mighty mixture of the great and base.
And think'st thou, Scott, by vain conceit perchance,
On public taste to foist thy stale romance,
Though Murray with his Miller may combine
To yield thy muse just half-a-crown per line ?
No ! when the sons of song descend to trade,
Their bays are sear, their former laurels fade.
Let such forego the poet's sacred name,
Who rack their brains for lucre, not for fame.
Still for stern Mammon may they toil in vain !
And sadly gaze on gold they cannot gain !
Such be their meed, such still the just reward
Of prostituted muse and hireling bard !
For this we spurn Apollo's venal son,
And bid a long " good night to Marmion."

These are the themes that claim our plaudit now ;
These are the bards to whom the muse must bow ;

While Milton, Dryden, Pope, alike forgot,
Resign their hallow'd bays to Walter Scott.

The time has been, when yet the Muse was young,
When Homer swept the lyre, and Maro sung,
An epic scarce ten centuries could claim,
While awe-struck nations hail'd the magic name ;
The work of each immortal bard appears
The single wonder of a thousand years.
Empires have moulder'd from the face of earth,
Tongues have expired with those who gave them
birth,

Without the glory such a strain can give,
As even in ruin bids the language live.
Not so with us, though minor bards content,
On one great work a life of labour spent :
With eagle pinion soaring to the skies,
Behold the ballad-monger Southey rise !
To him let Camoëns, Milton, Tasso yield,
Whose annual strains, like armies, take the field.

Southey.

First in the ranks see Joan of Arc advance,
The scourge of England and the boast of France !
Though burnt by wicked Bedford for a witch,
Behold her statue placed in glory's niche ;
Her fetters burst, and just released from prison,
A virgin phoenix from her ashes risen.
Next see tremendous Thalaba come on,
Arabia's monstrous, wild and wond'rous son ;
Domdaniel's dread destroyer, who o'erthrew
More mad magicians than the world e'er knew.
Immortal hero ! all thy foes o'ercome,
For ever reign—the rival of Tom Thumb !
Since startled metre fled before thy face,
Well wert thou doom'd the last of all thy race !

Well might triumphant genii bear thee hence,
 Illustrious conqueror of common sense !
 Now, last and greatest, Madoc spreads his sails,
 Cacique in Mexico, and prince in Wales ;
 Tells us strange tales, as other travellers do,
 More old than Mandeville's and not so true.
 O Southey ! Southey ! cease thy varied song !
 A bard may chant too often and too long :
 As thou art strong in verse, in mercy, spare !
 A fourth, alas ! were more than we could bear.
 But if, in spite of all the world can say,
 Thou still wilt verseward plod thy weary way ;
 If still in Berkeley ballads most uncivil,
 Thou wilt devote old women to the devil,
 The babe unborn thy dread intent may rue ;
 " God help thee " Southey, and thy readers too.

Words-
 worth.

Next comes the dull disciple of thy school,
 That mild apostate from poetic rule,
 The simple Wordsworth, framer of a lay
 As soft as evening in his favourite May,
 Who warns his friend " to shake off toil and trouble,
 And quit his books, for fear of growing double ; "
 Who, both by precept and example, shows
 That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose ;
 Convincing all, by demonstration plain,
 Poetic souls delight in prose inane ;
 And Christmas stories, tortured into rhyme,
 Contain the essence of the true sublime.
 Thus, when he tells the tale of Betty Foy,
 The idiot mother of " an idiot boy ; "
 A moonstruck, silly lad, who lost his way
 And, like his bard, confounded night with day ;
 So close on each pathetic part he dwells,

And each adventure so sublimely tells,
That all who view "the idiot in his glory,"
Conceive the bard the hero of the story.

Shall gentle Coleridge pass unnoticed here,
To turgid ode and tumid stanza dear?
Though themes of innocence amuse him best,
Yet still obscurity's a welcome guest.
If Inspiration should her aid refuse
To him who takes a pixy for a muse,
Yet none in lofty numbers can surpass
The bard who soars to elegize an ass.
So well the subject suits his noble mind,
He brays, the laureat of the long-ear'd kind.

Coleridge.

* * * * *
Who in soft guise, surrounded by a choir,
Of virgins melting, not to Vesta's fire,
With sparkling eyes, and cheek by passion flush'd,
Strikes his wild lyre, while listening dames are
hush'd?

Moore.

'Tis Little ! **young Catullus of his day,**
As sweet, but as immoral, in his lay !
Grieved to condemn, the muse must still be just,
Nor spare melodious advocates of lust.
Pure is the flame which o'er her altar burns ;
From grosser incense with disgust she turns :
Yet kind to youth, this expiation o'er,
She bids thee "mend thy line and sin no more."

* * * * *
To the famed throng now paid the tribute due,
Neglected genius ! let me turn to you.

Come forth, O Campbell ! give thy talents scope ;
Who dares aspire if thou must cease to hope ?
And thou, melodious Roger ! rise at last,

Campbell.

Rogers.

- Recall the pleasing memory of the past ;
 Arise ! let blest remembrance still inspire,
 And strike to wonted tones thy hallow'd lyre ;
 Restore Apollo to his vacant throne, •
 Assert thy country's honour and thine own.
 What ! must deserted Poesy still weep
- Cowper. Where her last hopes with pious Cowper sleep ?
 Unless, perchance, from his cold bier she turns
- Burns. To deck the turf that wraps her minstrel Burns !
 No? though contempt hath mark'd the spurious
 brood,
 The race who rhyme from folly, or for food,
 Yet still some genuine sons 'tis her's to boast,
 Who, least affecting, still affect the most :
 Feel as they write, and write but as they feel—
 Bear witness Gifford, Sotheby, Macneil.
- * * * * * *
- Scott. And thou, too, Scott, resign to minstrels rude
 The wilder slogan of a border feud :
 Let others spin their meagre lines for hire ;
 Enough for genius if itself inspire !
- Southey. Let Southey sing, although his teeming muse,
 Prolific every spring, be too profuse ;
- Words-
worth.
Coleridge. Let simple Wordsworth chime his childish verse,
 And brother Coleridge lull the babe at nurse ;
 Let spectre-mongering Lewis aim, at most,
 To rouse the galleries or to raise a ghost ;
- Moore. Let Moore still sigh ; let Strangford steal from
 Moore,
 And swear that Camoëns sang such notes of yore ;
 Let Hayley hobble on, Montgomery rave,
 And godly Grahame chant a stupid stave ;
 Let sonneting Bowles his strains refine,

And whine and whimper to the fourteenth line ;
 Let Stott, Carlisle, Matilda, and the rest
 Of Grub-street, and of Grosvenor-place the best,
 Scrawl on, till death release us from the strain,
 Or Common Sense assert her rights again.
 But thou, with powers that mock the aid of praise,
 Shouldst leave to humbler bards ignoble lays ;
 Thy country's voice, the voice of all the nine,
 Demand a hallow'd harp—that harp is thine.
 Say ! will not Caledonia's annals yield
 The glorious record of some nobler field,
 Than the wild foray of a plundering clan,
 Whose proudest deeds disgrace the name of man ?
 Or Marmion's acts of darkness, fitter food
 For Sherwood's outlaw tales of Robin Hood ?
 Scotland ! still proudly claim thy native bard,
 And be thy praise his first, his best reward !
 Yet not with thee alone his praise shall live,
 But own the vast renown a world can give ;
 Be known, perchance, when Albion is no more,
 And tell the tale of what she was before ;
 To future times her faded fame recall,
 And save her glory, though his country fall.

From the Dedication to Don Juan. [1819

BOB Southey ! You're a poet—Poet-Laureate, Southey.
 And representative of all the race,
 Although 'tis true that you turn'd out a Tory at
 Last—yours has lately been a common case,—
 And now, my Epic Renegade ! what are ye at ?
 With all the Lakers, in and out of place ?
 A nest of tuneful persons, to my eye
 Like “four-and-twenty Blackbirds in a pye ;

"Which pye being open'd they began to sing"
 (This old song and new simile holds good),
 "A dainty dish to set before the King,"
 Or Regent, who admires such kind of food;—
 And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,
 But like a hawk encumber'd with his hood,—
 Explaining metaphysics to the nation—
 I wish he would explain his Explanation.

You, Bob ! are rather insolent, you know,
At being disappointed in your wish
To supersede all warblers here below,
And be the only Blackbird in the dish ;
And then you overstrain yourself, or so,
And tumble downward like the flying fish
Gasping on deck, because you soar too high, Bob,
And fall, for lack of moisture quite a-dry, Bob.

Words-
worth.

And Wordsworth, in a rather long "Excursion"
(I think the quarto holds five hundred pages),
Has given a sample from the vasty version
Of his new system to perplex the sages ;
'Tis poetry—at least by his assertion,
And may appear so when the dog-star rages—
And he who understands it would be able
To add a story to the Tower of Babel.

You—Gentlemen ! by dint of long seclusion
 From better company, have kept your own
 At Keswick, and, through still continued fusion
 Of one another's minds, at last have grown
 To deem as a most logical conclusion,
 That Poesy has wreaths for you alone :

There is a narrowness in such a notion,
Which makes me wish you'd change your lakes for
ocean.

I would not imitate the petty thought,
Nor coin my self-love to so a base a vice,
For all the glory your conversion brought,
Since gold alone should not have been its price.
You have your salary ; was't for that you wrought ?
And Wordsworth has his place in the Excise.
You're shabby fellows—true—but poets still,
And duly seated on the immortal hill.

Your bays may hide the baldness of your brows—
Perhaps some virtuous blushes :—let them go—
To you I envy neither fruit nor boughs—
And for the fame you would engross below,
The field is universal, and allows

Scope to all such as feel the inherent glow :
Scott, Rogers, Campbell, Moore and Crabbe, will
try

'Gainst you the question with posterity.

Scott,
Rogers,
Campbell,
Moore,
Crabbe

For me, who, wandering with pedestrian Muses,
Contend not with you on the winged steed,
I wish your fate may yield ye, when she chooses,
The fame you envy, and the skill you need.
And recollect a poet nothing loses

In giving to his brethren his full meed
Of merit, and complaint of present days
Is not the certain path to future praise.

He that reserves his laurels for posterity
(Who does not often claim the bright reversion)

Has generally no great crop to spare it, he
 Being only injured by his own assertion ;
 And although here and there some glorious rarity
 Arise like Titan from the sea's immersion,
 The major part of such appellants go
 To—God knows where—for no one else can know.

Milton.

If, fallen in evil days on evil tongues,
 Milton appeal'd to the Avenger, Time,
 If Time, the Avenger, execrates his wrongs,
 And makes the word "Miltonic" mean "*sub-*
lime,"
He deign'd not to belie his soul in songs,
 Nor turn his very talent to a crime ;
He did not loathe the Sire to laud the Son,
 But closed the tyrant-hater he begun.

Think'st thou, could he—the blind Old Man—arise
 Like Samuel from the grave, to freeze once more
 The blood of monarchs with his prophecies,
 Or be alive again—again all hoar
 With time and trials, and those helpless eyes,
 And heartless daughters—worn—and pale—and
 poor ;
 Would *he* adore a sultan ? *he* obey
 The intellectual eunuch Castlereagh ?

From Don Juan. [1819

CANTO I.

Milton,
 Dryden,
 Pope,
 Words-
 worth,
 Coleridge,
 Southey.

THOU shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope,
 Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge,
 Southey ;
 Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,

| | |
|--|-----------|
| The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy ; | |
| With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope, | Crabbe. |
| And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy ; | Campbell. |
| Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor | Rogers. |
| Commit—flirtation with the muse of Moore. | Moore. |

CANTO 3.

[1821

| | |
|---|---------|
| MILTON's the prince of poets—so we say, | Milton. |
| A little heavy, but no less divine. | |

| | |
|---|--------|
| WORDSWORTH's last quarto, by the way, is bigger | Words- |
| Than any since the birthday of typography ; | worth. |
| A drowsy frowsy poem call'd the "Excursion," | |
| Writ in a manner which is my aversion. | |

* * * * * *

| | |
|--|--|
| We learn from Horace, "Homer sometimes | |
| sleeps"; | |

| | |
|---|--------|
| We feel without him, Wordsworth sometimes | Words- |
| wakes,— | worth. |

To show with what complacency he creeps,
 With his dear "*Waggoners*," around his lakes.
 He wishes for a "boat" to sail the deeps—

Of ocean?—No, of air; and then he makes
 Another outcry for "a little boat,"
 And drivels seas to set it well afloat.

If he must fain sweep o'er the ethereal plain,
 And Pegasus runs restive in his "*Waggon*,"
 Could he not beg the loan of Charles' Wain?
 Or pray Medea for a single dragon?
 Or if too classic for his vulgar brain,
 He fear'd his neck to venture such a nag on,

And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
 Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

“Pedlars,” and “Boats,” and “Waggons!” O!
 ye shades

Pope,
 Dryden.

Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
 That trash of such sort not alone evades
 Contempt, but from the bathos’ vast abyss
 Floats scum-like uppermost, and these Jack Cades
 Of sense and song above your graves may hiss—
 The “little boat-man” and his “Peter Bell”
 Can sneer at him who drew “Achitophel!”

CANTO II.

[1823]

IN twice five years “the greatest living poet,”
 Like to the champion in the fisty ring,
 Is call’d on to support his claim, or show it,
 Although ’tis an imaginary thing.

Byron.

Even I—albeit I’m sure I did not know it,
 Nor sought of foolscap subjects to be king,—
 Was reckon’d a considerable time,
 The grand Napoleon of the realms of rhyme.

But Juan was my Moscow, and Faliero
 My Leipsic, and my Mount St. Jean seems
 Cain;

“La Belle Alliance” of dunces down at zero,
 Now that the Lion’s fallen, may rise again;
 But I will fall at least as fell my hero;
 Nor reign at all, or as a monarch reign;
 Or to some lonely isle of gaolers go,
 With turncoat Southey for my turnkey Lowe.

Sir Walter reign'd before me ; Moore and Campbell

Scott.
Moore.
Campbell.

Before and after ; but now grown more holy,
The Muses upon Sion's hill must ramble
With poets almost Clergymen, or wholly.

Then there 's my gentle Euphues ; who, they say
Sets up for being a sort of *moral me* ;
He'll find it rather difficult some day
To turn out both, or either it may be.

Leigh
Hunt.

Some persons think that Coleridge hath the sway ;
And Wordsworth has supporters, two or three ;
And that deep-mouth'd Bæotian "Savage Landor"
Has taken for a swan rogue Southey's gander.

Coleridge.
Words-
worth.
Landor
Southey.

John Keats, who was kill'd off by one critique
Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible, without Greek

Keats.

Contrived to talk about the gods of late,
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.
Poor fellow ! His was an untoward fate ;
'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article.

CANTO 15.

[1824

HAVING wound up with this sublime comparison,

Methinks we may proceed upon our narrative,
And as my friend Scott says, "I sound my
warison ;"

Scott.

Scott, the superlative of my comparative—

Scott, who can paint your Christian Knight or
Saracen,

Serf, lord, man, with such skill as none would
share it, if

There had not been one Shakespeare and Voltaire,
Of one or both of whom he seems the heir.

MOORE.

From Intercepted Letters. [1813

Scott.

SHOULD you feel any touch of *poetical* glow,
We've a scheme to suggest—Mr. Sc-tt, you must
know,

(Who, we're sorry to say it, now works for *the*
Row)

Having quitted the Borders, to seek new renown,
Is coming, by long Quarto stages, to Town ;
And beginning with Rokeby (the job's sure to
pay)

Means to *do* all the gentlemen's seats on the way.
Now the scheme is (though none of our hackneys
can beat him,

To start a fresh poet through Highgate to *meet*
him ;

Who by means of quick proofs—no revises—long
coaches—

May do a few Villas, before Sc-tt approaches.

Indeed, if our Pegasus be not curst shabby,
He'll reach, without found'ring, at least Woburn
Abbey.

Such, Sir, is our plan—if you're up to the freak,
'Tis a match ! and we'll put you *in training* next
week.

Reflections before reading Lord Byron's
Memoirs, written by himself. [1819

LET me, a moment—ere with fear and hope
Of gloomy, glorious things, these leaves I ope—
As one in fairy tale, to whom the key

Of some enchanter's secret halls is given,
Doubts, while he enters, slowly, tremblingly,

If he shall meet with shapes from hell or heaven—
Let me, a moment, think what thousands live
O'er the wide earth this instant, who would give,
Gladly, whole sleepless nights to bend the brow
Over these precious leaves, as I do now.

How all who know—and where is he unknown ?
To what far region have his songs not flown,
Like Psaphon's birds, speaking their master's
name,

In every language, syllabled by Fame ?
How all, who've felt the various spells combined
Within the circle of that master-mind,—
Like spells, derived from many a star, and met
Together in some wondrous amulet,—
Would burn to know when first the Light awoke
In his young soul—and if the gleams that broke
From that Aurora of his genius, raised
Most pain or bliss in those on whom they blazed ;
Would love to trace the unfolding of that power,
Which hath grown ampler, grander, every hour ;

And feel, in watching o'er his first advance,
As did the Egyptian traveller, when he stood
By the young Nile, and fathom'd with his lance
The first small fountains of that mighty flood.

They, too, who, 'mid the scornful thoughts that
dwell

In his rich fancy, tinging all its streams,—
As if the Star of Bitterness, which fell
On earth, of old, had touch'd them with its
beams—

Can track a spirit, which, though driven to hate,
From Nature's hands came kind, affectionate ;
And which, even now, struck as it is with blight,
Comes out, at times, in Love's own native light ;
How gladly all, who've watch'd these struggling
rays

Of a bright, ruin'd spirit through his lays,
Would here inquire, as from his own frank lips,

What desolating grief, what wrongs had driven
That noble nature into cold eclipse ;

Like some fair orb that, once a sun in heaven,
And born, not only to surprise, but cheer
With warmth and lustre all within its sphere,
Is now so quench'd, that of its grandeur lasts
Nought, but the wide, cold shadow which it casts !

Eventful volume ! whatsoe'er the change
Of scene and clime—the adventures bold and
strange—

The griefs—the frailties, but too frankly told—
The loves, the feuds, thy pages may unfold,
If Truth with half so prompt a hand unlocks

His virtues or his failings, we shall find
The record there of friendships, held like rocks,
And enmities, like sun-touch'd snow, resign'd ;
Of fealty, cherish'd without change or chill,
In those who served him, young, and serve him
still ;
Of generous aid, given with that noiseless art
Which wakes not pride, to many a wounded
heart ;
Of acts—but no—*not* from himself must aught
Of the bright features of his life be sought.
While they, who court the world, like Milton's
cloud,
“Turn forth their silver lining” on the crowd,
This gifted Being wraps himself in night ;
And, keeping all that softens, and adorns,
And gilds his social nature hid from sight,
Turns but its darkness on a world he scorns.

[1832

Verses to the Poet Crabbe's Inkstand.

ALL as he left it !—even the pen
So lately at that mind's command,
Carelessly lying, as if then
Just fallen from his gifted hand.

Have we then lost him ? scarce an hour,
A little hour, seems to have past,
Since Life and Inspiration's power
Around that relic breathed their last.

Ah, powerless now—like talisman,
Found in some vanish'd wizard's halls,

Whose mighty charm with him began,
Whose charm with him extinguish'd falls.

Yet though, alas ! the gifts that shone
Around that pen's exploring track,
Be now, with its great master, gone,
Nor living hand can call them back ;

Who does not feel, while thus his eyes
Rest on the enchanter's broken wand,
Each earth-born spell it work'd arise
Before him in succession gra^h ?

Grand, from the Truth that reigns o'er all ;
The unshrinking Truth, that lets her light
Through Life's low, dark interior fall,
Opening the whole, serenely bright :

Yet softening, as she frowns along,
O'er scenes which angels weep to see—
Where Truth itself half veils the wrong,
In pity of the misery.

True Bard !—and simple, as the race
Of true-born poets ever are,
When, stooping from their starry place,
They're children, near, though gods, afar.

How freshly doth my mind recall,
'Mong the few days I've known with thee,
One that, most buoyantly of all,
Floats in the wake of memory ;

When he, the poet, doubly graced,
In life, as in his perfect strain,
With that pure mellowing power of Taste,
Without which Fancy shines in vain ;

Rogers.

Who in his page will leave behind,
Pregnant with genius though it be,
But half the treasures of a mind,
Where Sense o'er all holds mastery :

Friend of long years ! of friendship tried
Through many a bright and dark event ;
In doubts, my judge—in taste, my guide—
In all, my stay and ornament !

He, too, was of our feast that day,
And all were guests of one, whose hand
Hath shed a new and deathless ray
Around the lyre of this great land ;

Campbell.

In whose sea-odes—as in those shells
Where Ocean's voice of majesty
Seems still to sound—immortal dwells
Old Albion's Spirit of the Sea.

Such was our host ; and though, since then,
Slight clouds have risen 'twixt him and me,
Who would not grasp such hand again,
Stretch'd forth again in amity ?

Who can, in this short life, afford
To let such mists a moment stay,

When thus one frank, atoning word,
Like sunshine, melts them all away?

Moore.

Bright was our board that day, though *one*
Unworthy brother there had place;
As 'mong the horses of the Sun,
One was, they say, of earthly race.

Yet, *next* to Genius is the power
Of feeling where true Genius lies
And there was light around that hour
Such as, in memory, never dies;

Light which comes o'er me, as I gaze,
Thou Relic of the Dead, on thee,
Like all such dreams of vanish'd days,
Brightly, indeed—but mournfully!

SHELLEY.

From Letter to Maria Gisborne. [1820

Shake-
speare,
Sidney,
Spenser.

—SHAKESPEARE, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the bless'd.

From Peter Bell the Third. [1819

Words-
worth.

ALL things that Peter saw and felt
Had a peculiar aspect to him;
And, when they came within the belt
Of his own nature, seem'd to melt,
Like cloud to cloud, into him.

And so, the outward world uniting
To that within him, he became
Considerably uninviting
To those who, meditation slighting,
Were moulded in a different frame.

He had a mind which was somehow
At once circumference and centre
Of all he might or feel or know ;
Nothing went ever out, although
Something did ever enter.

He had as much imagination
As a pint-pot ;—he never could
Fancy another situation,
From which to dart his contemplation,
Than that wherein he stood.

Yet his was individual mind,
And new-created all he saw
In a new manner, and refined
Those new creations, and combined
Them by a master-spirit's law.

Thus—although unimaginative—
An apprehension clear, intense,
Of his mind's work, had made alive,
The things it wrought on ; I believe
Wakening a sort of thought in sense.

But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
To be a kind of moral eunuch :
He touch'd the hem of Nature's shift

Felt faint,—and never dared uplift
The closest all-concealing tunic.

She laugh'd the while with an arch smile,
And kiss'd him with a sister's kiss,
And said: "My best Diogenes,
I love you well—but, if you please,
Tempt not again my deepest bliss.

"'Tis you are cold ; for I, not coy,
Yield love for love, warm, frank and true ;
Burns. And Burns, a Scottish peasant boy—
His errors prove it—knew my joy
More, learned friend, than you."

[1820]

From Proem to the Witch of Atlas.

Words-
worth.

WORDSWORTH informs us he was nineteen years
Considering and re-touching Peter Bell ;
Watering his laurels with the killing tears
Of slow dull care, so that their roots to hell
Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the
spheres
Of heaven with dewy leaves and flowers ; this
well
May be, for heaven and earth conspire to foil
The ever-busy gardener's blundering toil.

My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature
As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise
Clothes for our grandsons—but she matches Peter,
Though he took nineteen years, and she three
days,

In dressing. Light the vest of flowing ~~more~~
 She wears : he, proud as dandy with his stays,
 Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress
 Like King Lear's loop'd and window'd raggedness.

To Wordsworth. [c. 1815]

PORT of Nature, thou hast wept to know
 That things depart which never may return ;
 Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first
 glow,
 Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to
 mourn.
 These common woes I feel. One loss is mine,
 Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
 Thou wert as a lone star whose light did shine
 On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar ;
 Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
 Above the blind and battling multitude ;
 In honour'd poverty thy voice did weave
 Songs consecrate to truth and liberty.
 Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
 Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to
 be.

From Peter Bell the Third. [1819]

HE was a mighty poet and
 A subtle-soul'd psychologist ;
 All things he seem'd to understand
 Of old or new, of sea or land—
 But his own mind which was a mist.

Coleridge.

This was a man who might have turn'd
 Hell into Heaven—and so in gladness
 A Heaven unto himself have earn'd :
 But he in shadows undiscern'd
 Trusted, and damn'd himself to madness.

He spoke of poetry, and how
 Divine it was—"a light—a love—
 A spirit which like wind doth blow
 As it listeth to and fro ;
 A dew rain'd down from God above :

A power which comes and goes like dream,
 And which none can ever trace—
 Heaven's light on earth—Truth's brightest beam."
 And when he ceased there lay the gleam
 Of those words upon his face.

From a Letter to Maria Gisborne. [1820

Coleridge.

YOU will see Coleridge ; he who sits obscure
 In the exceeding lustre and the pure
 Intense irradiation of a mind
 Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
 Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
 A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
 A hooded eagle among blinking owls.

Leigh
 Hunt.

You will see Hunt ; one of those happy souls
 Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
 This world would smell like what it is—a tomb ;
 Who is what others seem. His room no doubt
 Is still adorn'd by many a cast from Shout :
 With graceful flowers tastefully placed about,

And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
 And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung,
 The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
 Of female friends, sisters-in-law and cousins.
 And there is he with his eternal puns,
 Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
 Thundering for money at a poet's door ;
 Alas ! it is no use to say " I'm poor ! "—
 Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
 Things wiser than were ever said in book,
 Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness.
 You will see Hogg ; and I cannot express
 His virtues (though I know that they are great),
 Because he locks, then barricades, the gate
 Within which they inhabit. Of his wit
 And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
 He is a pearl within an oyster-shell,
 One of the richest of the deep.

Shake-
 speare.
 Hogg.

*From Lines written among the Euganean
 Hills.* [1818

SUN-GIRT city ! thou hast been
 Ocean's child, and then his queen.
 Now is come a darker day.

* * * *

Perish ! Let there only be,
 Floating o'er thy hearthless sea
 As the garment of the sky
 Clothes the world immortally,
 One remembrance, more sublime
 Than the tatter'd pall of time

Byron.

Which scarce hides thy visage wan :
 That a tempest-cleaving swan
 Of the songs of Albion,
 Driven from his ancestral streams
 By the might of evil dreams,
 Found a nest in thee ; and ocean
 Welcomed him with such emotion
 That its joy grew his, and sprung
 From his lips like music flung
 O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
 Chastening terror. What though yet
 Poesy's unfailing river,
 Which through Albion winds for ever,
 Lashing with melodious wave
 Many a sacred poet's grave,
 Mourn its latest nurseling fled ?
 What though thou with all thy dead
 Scarce canst for this fame repay
 Aught thine own,—O ! rather say,
 Though thy sins and slaveries foul
 Overcloud a sunlike soul ?
 As the ghost of Homer clings
 Round Scamander's wasting springs ;
 As divinest Shakespeare's might
 Fills Avon and the world with light,
 Like Omniscient Power, which he
 Imaged 'mid mortality ;
 As the love from Petrarch's urn
 Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
 A quenchless lamp by which the heart
 Sees things unearthly ;—so thou art,
 Mighty spirit ! so shall be
 The city that did refuge thee !

Shake-
speare.

Fragment.

[1818]

O MIGHTY mind, in whose deep stream this age
Shakes like a reed in the unheeding storm,
Why dost thou curb not thine own sacred rage?

Byron.

Sonnet to Byron.

[1821]

IF I esteem'd you less, Envy would kill
Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
The ministration of the thoughts that fill
The mind which, like a worm whose life may
share
A portion of the unapproachable,
Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.
But such is my regard that nor your power
To soar above the heights where others climb,
Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
Cast from the envious future on the time,
Move one regret for his unhonour'd name
Who dares these words:—the worm beneath the
sod
May lift itself in homage of the God.

On Keats,

[1821]

Who desired that on his tomb should be
inscribed—

“HERE lieth One whose name was writ on water.”
But, ere the breath that could erase it blew,
Death, in remorse for that fell slaughter,
Death, the immortalizing winter, flew

Athwart the stream,—and time's monthless torrent
grew
A scroll of crystal, blazoning the name
Of Adonais."

Adonais ; [1821
An Elegy on the death of John Keats.

I.

I WEEP for Adonais—he is dead !
Oh ! weep for Adonais, though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head !
And thou, sad Hour selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow ! Say :
" With me
Died Adonais ! Till the future dares
Forget the past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity."

II.

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy son lay, pierced by the shaft which
flies
In darkness ? Where was lorn Urania
When Adonais died ? With veiled eyes,
'Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamour'd breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies
With which, like flowers that mock the corse
beneath,
He had adorn'd and hid the coming bulk of Death.

III.

O, weep for Adonais—he is dead !

Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep !—

Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning
bed

Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep

Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep ;

For he is gone where all things wise and fair

Descend. O dream not that the amorous deep

Will yet restore him to the vital air ;

Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our
despair.



IV.

Most musical of mourners, weep again !

Lament anew, Urania !—He died,

Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,

Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride

The priest, the slave, and the liberticide,

Trampled and mock'd with many a loathèd rite

Of lust and blood. He went unterrified

Into the gulf of death ; but his clear sprite

Yet reigns o'er earth, the third among the Sons of
Light.

Milton.



V.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew !

Not all to that bright station dared to climb ;

And happier they their happiness who knew,

Whose tapers yet burn through that night of
time

In which suns perish'd. Others more sublime,

Struck by the envious wrath of man or God,
 Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime ;
 And some yet live, treading the thorny road
 Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's
 serene abode.

VI.

Keats.

But now thy youngest, dearest one, has perish'd,
 The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
 Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherish'd,
 And fed with true love tears instead of dew.
 Most musical of mourners, weep anew !
 Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
 The bloom whose petals, nipt before they blew,
 Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste ;
 The broken lily lies—the storm is overpast.

VII.

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
 Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
 He came ; and bought, with price of purest
 breath,
 A grave among the eternal.—Come away !
 Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
 Is yet his fitting charnel-roof, while still
 He lies as if in dewy sleep he lay ;
 Awake him not ! surely he takes his fill
 Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

VIII.

He will awake no more, oh never more !
 Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
 The shadow of white Death, and at the door

Invisible Corruption waits to trace
 His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place ;
 The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
 Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
 So fair a prey, till darkness and the law
 Of change shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain
 draw.

IX.

O, weep for Adonais !— The quick Dreams,
 The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
 Who were his flocks, whom near the living
 streams
 Of his young spirit he fed and whom he taught
 The love which was its music, wander not—
 Wander no more from kindling brain to brain,
 But droop there whence they sprung ; and
 mourn their lot
 Round the cold heart where, after their sweet
 pain,
 They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home
 again.

X.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold
 head,
 And fans him with her moonlight wings, and
 cries :
 “ Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead !
 See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
 Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
 A tear some dream has loosen'd from his brain.”
 Lost Angel of a ruin'd Paradise !

She knew not 'twas her own ; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its
rain.

XI.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Wash'd his light limbs as if embalming them ;
Another clipt her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem ;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak,—
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

XII.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the
breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quench'd its caress upon his icy lips ;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour which the cold night clips,
It flush'd through his pale limbs, and pass'd to its
eclipse.

XIII.

And others came. Desires and Adorations ;
Winged Persuasions and veil'd Destinies ;
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering in-
carnations

Of Hopes and Fears, and twilight Fantasies;
 And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs;
 And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
 Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,—
 Came in slow pomp;—the moving pomp might
 seem
 Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

XIV.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought
 From shape and hue and odour and sweet
 sound,
 Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
 Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
 Wet with tears which should adorn the ground,
 Dimm'd the aerial eyes that kindle day;
 Afar the melancholy Thunder moan'd,
 Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
 And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their
 dismay.

XV.

Lost Echo sits among the voiceless mountains,
 And feeds her grief with his remember'd lay,
 And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
 Or amorous birds perch'd on the young green
 spray,
 Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
 Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
 Than those for whose disdain she pined away
 Into a shadow of all sounds:—a drear
 Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen
 hear.

XVI.

Grief made the young Spring ⁺wild, and she
threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves ; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen
Year ?

To Phœbus was not Hyacinth so dear,
Not to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais ; wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turn'd to tears,—odour, to sighing
ruth.

XVII.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale,
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain ;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,
Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee : the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent
breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly
guest !

XVIII.

Ah, woe is me ! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year ;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone
The ants, the bees, the swallows, reappear ;

Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Seasons' bier ;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brake ;
And the green lizard and the golden snake,
Like unimprison'd flames, out of their trance awake.

XIX.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and
ocean,
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has
burst,
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on chaos ; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light ;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst,
Diffuse themselves and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

XX.

The leprous corpse touch'd by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath ;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death,
And mock the merry worm that walks beneath.
Nought we know dies. Shall that alone which
knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning ?—the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quench'd in a most cold repose.

XXI.

Alas ! that all we loved of him ^{we} should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal ! Woe is me !
Whence are we, and why are we ? of what scene
The actors or spectators ? Great and mean
Meet mass'd in death, who lends what life must
borrow.

As long as skies are blue and fields are green,
Evening must usher night, night urge the
morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake
year to sorrow.

XXII.

He will awake no more, oh, never more !
“Wake thou,” cried Misery, “childless Mother !
Rise

Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core
A wound more fierce than his, with tears and
sighs.”

And all the Dreams that watch'd Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their Sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried : “Arise !”

Swift as a thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour
sprung.

XXIII.

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Out of the east, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as ghost abandoning a bier,

Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt, Urania ;
So sadden'd round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist ; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

XXIV.

Out of her secret paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone and
steel
And hun an hearts, which to her æry tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell.
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp
than they,
Rent the soft form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of
May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

XXV.

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blush'd to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and life's pale light
Flash'd through those limbs, so late her dear
delight.
“Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night !
Leave me not !” cried Urania : her distress
Roused Death : Death rose and smiled, and met
her vain caress.

XXVI.

“ Stay yet awhile ! speak to me once again !
Kiss me so long but as a kiss may live !
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else
 survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais ! I would give
All that I am, to be as thou now art :
But I am chain'd to Time, and cannot thence
 depart.

XXVII.

“ Oh gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty
 heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den ?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh where was then
Wisdom the mirror'd shield, or Scorn the spear ?
Or, hadst thou waited the full cycle when
Thy spirit should have fill'd its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like
 deer.

XXVIII.

“ The herded wolves bold only to pursue ;
The obscene ravens clamorous o'er the dead,
The vulture to the conqueror's banner true,
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion,—how they
 fled,

When, like Apollo from his golden bow,
 The Pythian ~~of~~ the age one arrow sped,
 And smiled!—The spoilers tempt no second
 blow,
 . . .
 They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them as
 they go.

“The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
 He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
 Is gather'd into death without a dawn,
 And the immortal stars awake again.
 So is it in the world of living men:
 A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
 Making earth bare and veiling heaven; and when
 It sinks, the swarms that dimm'd or shared its light
 Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night.”

XXX.

Thus ceased she: and the Mountain Shepherds
 came,
 Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
 The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame Byron.
 Over his living head like heaven is bent,
 An early but enduring monument,
 Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
 In sorrow. From her wilds Ierne sent
 The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong, Moore.
 And love taught grief to fall like music from his
 tongue.

XXXI.

'Midst others of less note, came one frail Form, Shelley.
 A phantom among men, companionless

As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell. He, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness
Actaeon-like ; and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts along that rugged way,
Pursued like raging hounds their father and their
prey.

XXXII.

A pard-like Spirit beautiful and swift—
A love in desolation mask'd—a power
Girt round with weakness ; it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour.
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow ;—even whilst we speak
Is it not broken ? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly : on a cheek
The life can burn in blood even while the heart
may break.

XXXIII.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white and pied and blue ;
And a light spear topp'd with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasp'd it. Of that
crew
He came the last, neglected and apart ;
A herd-abandon'd deer, struck by the hunter's
dart.

XXXIV.

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears. Well knew that gentle
band

Who in another's fate now wept his own.
As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow, sad Urania scann'd
The Stranger's mien, and murmur'd: "Who
art thou?"

He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's—O that it
should be so!

XXXV.

What softer voice is hush'd over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honour'd the departed
one,

Let me not vex with inharmonious sighs
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

XXXVI.

Our Adonais has drunk poison—oh
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,

But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre
unstrung. • •

XXXVII.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remember'd name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and self-contempt shall cling to thee,
Hot shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt—as

XXXVIII.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below.
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now.
Dust to the dust: but the pure spirit shall flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the
same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of
shame.

XXXIX.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep!
He hath awakened from the dream of life.

'Tis we who, lost in stormy visions, keep
 With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
 And in mad trance strike with our spirit's knife
 Invulnerable nothings. We decay
 Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
 Convulse us and consume us day by day,
 And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living
 clay.

XL.

He has outsoar'd the shadow of our night.
 Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,
 Can touch him not and torture not again;
 From the contagion of the world's slow stain
 He is secure; and now can never mourn
 A heart grown cold, a head grown grey, in vain;
 Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
 With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

XLI.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
 Mourn not for Adonais.—Thou young Dawn,
 Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone!
 Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
 Cease ye faint flowers and fountains! and, thou
 Air,
 Which like a mourning-veil thy scarf hadst
 thrown
 O'er the abandon'd Earth, now leave it bare
 Even to the joyous stars which smile on its
 despair!

XLII.

He is made one with Nature. There is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird.
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,—
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own,
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

XLIII.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely. He doth bear
His part, while the One Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dense dull world; compelling
there
All new successions to the form they wear;
Torturing the unwilling dross, that checks its
flight,
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the heaven's
light.

XLIV.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguish'd not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it for what

Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there,
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy
air.

XLV.

| | |
|---|-------------|
| The inheritors of unfulfill'd renown Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought, Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton | Chatterton. |
| Rose pale, his solemn agony had not Yet faded from him ; Sidney, as he fought, And as he fell, and as he lived and loved, Sublimely mild, a spirit without spot, Arose ; and Lucan, by his death approved : | Sidney. |
| Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reproved. | |

XLVI.

And many more, whose names on earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
“Thou art become as one of us,” they cry ;
“It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an heaven of song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our
throng !”

XLVII.

Who mourns for Adonais? oh come forth,
Fond wretch, and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous earth ;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light

Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light, lest it make thee sink,
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the
brink.

XLVIII.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
O, not of him, but of our joy. 'Tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions, there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend—they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their
prey;
And he is gather'd to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

XLIX.

Go thou to Rome,—at once the paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shatter'd mountains
rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness,
Pass, till the Spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access,
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is
spread.

L.

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull
 Time
 Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
 And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
 Pavilioning the dust of him who plann'd
 This refuge for his memory, doth stand
 Like flame transform'd to marble; and beneath
 A field is spread, on which a newer band
 Have pitch'd in heaven's smile their camp of
 death
 Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguish'd
 breath.

LI.

Here pause. These graves are all too young as yet
 To have outgrown the sorrow which consign'd
 Its charge to each; and, if the seal is set
 Here on one fountain of a mourning mind,
 Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
 Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
 Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
 Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
 What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

LII.

The One remains, the many change and pass;
 Heaven's light for ever shines, Earth's shadows
 fly;
 Life, like a dome of many-colour'd glass,
 Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
 Until Death tramples it to fragments.—Die,
 If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
 Follow where all is fled!—Rome's azure sky,

Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

LIII.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my
heart?

Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart.
A light is pass'd from the revolving year,
And man and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.

The soft sky smiles, the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither!

No more let life divide what death can join to-
gether.

LIV.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

LV.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng
Whose sails are never to the tempest given.
The massy earth and spherèd skies are riven!

I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar!
 Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of heaven,
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

KEATS.

On first looking into Chapman's
 Homer. [p. 1817

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
 Round many western islands have I been
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
 That deep brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne ;
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold : Chapman.
 Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
 When a new planet swims into his ken ;
 Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
 He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Sonnet.

SPENSER ! a jealous honourer of thine, Spenser.
 A forester deep in thy midmost trees,
 Did, last eve, ask my promise to refine
 Some English, that might strive thine ear to
 please.

But, Elfin-poet ! 'tis impossible
For an inhabitant of wintry earth
To rise, like Phœbus, with a golden quill,
Fire-wing'd, and make a morning in his mirth.
It is impossible to 'scape from toil
O' the sudden, and receive thy spiriting :
The flower must drink the nature of the soil
Before it can put forth its blossoming :
Be with me in the summer days and I
Will for thine honour and his pleasure try.

From Sleep and Poetry. [1817

Is there so small a range
In the present strength of manhood, that the high
Imagination cannot freely fly
As she was wont of old ? prepare her steeds,
Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds
Upon the clouds ? Has she not shown us all ?
From the clear space of ether, to the small
Breath of new buds unfolding ? From the meaning
Of Jove's large eyebrow, to the tender greening
Of April meadows ? Here her altar shone,
E'en in this isle ; and who could paragon
The fervid choir that lifted up a noise
Of harmony, to where it aye will poise
Its mighty self of convoluting sound,
Huge as a planet, and like that roll round,
Eternally around a dizzy void ?
Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd
With honours ; nor had any other care
Than to sing out and soothe their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism
 Nurtured by foppery and barbarism
 Made great Apollo blush for this his land.
 Men were thought wise who could not understand
 His glories: with a puling infant's force
 They sway'd about upon a rocking-horse,
 And thought it Pegasus. Ah, dismal-soul'd!
 The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
 Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
 Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
 Of summer nights collected still to make
 The morning precious: beauty was awake!
 Why were not ye awake? But ye were dead
 To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed
 To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
 And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
 Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit.
 Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
 Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
 A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
 Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
 That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
 And did not know it,—no, they went about,
 Holding a poor decrepit standard out,
 Mark'd with most flimsy mottoes, and in large
 The name of one Boileau!

18th Century
Poets.

O ye whose charge
 It is to hover round our pleasant hills!
 Whose congregated majesty so fills
 My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace
 Your hallow'd names in this unholy place,
 So near those common folks; did not their shames
 Affright you? Did our old lamenting Thames

Delight you? Did ye never cluster round
 Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound,
 And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu
 To regions where no more the laurel grew?
 Or did ye stay to give a welcoming
 To some lone spirits who could proudly sing
 Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so:
 But let me think away those times of woe:
 Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed
 Rich benedictions o'er us; ye have wreathed
 Fresh garlands: for sweet music has been heard
 In many places;—some has been upstirr'd
 From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,
 By a swan's ebon bill; from a thick brake,
 Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
 Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild
 About the earth; happy are ye and glad.

reds-
th.

From An Epistle to Charles Cowden

Clarke.

[1816

OFt have you seen a swan superbly frowning,
 And with proud breast his own white shadow
 crowning;
 He slants his neck beneath the waters bright
 So silently, it seems a beam of light
 Come from the galaxy: anon he sports,—
 With outspread wings the Naiad Zephyr courts,
 Or ruffles all the surface of the lake
 In striving from its crystal face to take
 Some diamond water drops, and them to treasure
 In milky nest, and sip them off at leisure.
 But not a moment can he there ensure them,

Nor to such downy rest can he allure them ;
 For down they rush as though they would be free,
 And drop like hours into eternity.

Just like that bird am I in loss of time,

Keats.

Whene'er I venture on the stream of rhyme ;
 With shatter'd boat, oar snap, and canvas rent,
 I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent ;
 Still scooping up the water with my fingers,
 In which a trembling diamond never lingers.

By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see
 Why I have never penn'd a line to thee :
 Because my thoughts were never free and clear,
 And little fit to please a classic ear ;
 Because my wine was of too poor a savour
 For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour
 Of sparkling Helicon :—small good it were
 To take him to a desert rude and bare,
 Who had on Baïæ's shore reclined at ease,
 While Tasso's page was floating in a breeze
 That gave soft music from Armida's bowers,
 Mingled with fragrance from her rarest flowers :
 Small good to one who had by Mulla's stream
 Fondled the maidens with the breasts of cream ;
 Who had beheld Belphebe in a brook,
 And lovely Una in a leafy nook,
 And Archimago leaning o'er his book :
 Who had of all that 's sweet tasted, and seen
 From silvery ripple, up to beauty's queen ;
 From the sequester'd haunts of gay Titania,
 To the blue dwelling of divine Urania :
 One who of late had ta'en sweet forest walks
 With him who elegantly chats and talks—

Spenser

- Leigh Hunt. The wrong'd Libertas—who has told you stories
 Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories ;
 Of troops chivalrous prancing through a city,
 And tearful ladies, made for love and pity :
 With many else which I have never known.
 Thus have I thought ; and days on days have flown
 Slowly, or rapidly—unwilling still
 For you to try my dull, unlearned quill.
 Nor should I now, but that I've known you long ;
 That you first taught me all the sweets of song :
 The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine ;
 What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine :
 Spenser. Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,
 And float along like birds o'er summer seas ;
 Milton. Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness :
 Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair
 slenderness.

*From Specimen of an Induction to a
 Poem.*

[1817]

- Spenser. SPENSER ! thy brows are arched, open, kind,
 And come like a clear sun-rise to my mind ;
 And always does my heart with pleasure dance,
 When I think on thy noble countenance :
 Where never yet was aught more earthly seen
 Than the pure freshness of thy laurels green.
 Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully
 Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh
 My daring steps : or if thy tender care,
 Thus startled unaware,
 Be jealous that the foot of other wight
 Should madly follow that bright path of light

Traced by thy loved *Libertas* ; he will speak,
 And tell thee that my prayer is very meek ;
 That I will follow with due reverence,
 And start, with awe at mine own strange pretence.
 Him thou wilt hear ; so I will rest in hope
 To see wide plains, fair trees, and lawny slope ;
 The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the
 flowers ;
 Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking
 towers.

Leigh Hunt?

From An Epistle to George Felton

Mathew.

[1816

O MATHEW ! lend thy aid
 To find a place where I may greet the maid—
 Where we may soft humanity put on,
 And sit, and rhyme, and think on Chatterton ;
 And that warm-hearted Shakespeare sent to meet
 him
 Four laurell'd spirits, heavenward to entreat him.

Chatterton.

Shake-
speare.

Sonnet. Addressed to Haydon. [1817

GREAT spirits now on earth are sojourning ;
 He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
 Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
 Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing :
 He of the rose, the violet, the spring,
 The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake :
 And lo !—whose steadfastness would never take
 A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
 And other spirits there are standing apart
 Upon the forehead of the age to come ;

Words-
worth.

Leigh Hunt.

These, these will give the world another heart,
 And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum
 Of mighty workings?—
 Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

LANDOR.

On Shakespeare. [1846]

IN poetry there is but one supreme,
 Tho' there are many angels round his throne,
 Mighty and beauteous, while his face is hid.

[1863]

Shake-
speare.

BEYOND our shores, past Alps and Apennines,
 Shakespeare, from heaven came thy creative
 breath,
 'Mid citron groves and over-arching vines
 Thy genius wept at Desdemona's death.
 In the proud sire thou badest anger cease,
 And Juliet by her Romeo sleep in peace;
 Then rose thy voice above the stormy sea,
 And Ariel flew from Prospero to thee.

Shakespeare and Milton. [1853]

Shake-
speare.

THE tongue of England, that which myriads
 Have spoken and will speak, were paralyzed
 Hereafter, but two mighty men stand forth
 Above the flight of ages, two alone;
 One crying out,
All nations speak thro' me.

The other :

Milton.

*True ; and thro' this trumpet burst
God's word ; the fall of Angels, and the doom
First of immortal, then of mortal, Man ;
Glory ! be Glory ! not to me, to God.*

Milton and Shakespeare. [1863

WITH frowning brow o'er pontiff-kings elate
Stood Dante, great the man, the poet great.

Milton in might and majesty surpast

Milton.

The triple world, and far his shade was cast.

On earth he sang amid the angelic host,

And Paradise to him was never lost.

But there was one who came these two between

With larger light than yet our globe had seen.

Shake-
speare.

Various were his creations, various speech

Without a Babel he bestow'd on each.

Raleigh and Bacon tower'd above that earth

Which in their day had given our Shakespeare
birth,

And neither knew his presence ! they half-blind

Saw not in him the grandest of mankind.

[1853

From To Lamartine, President of France.

'Twas not unseemly in the bravest bard

Milton.

From Paradise and angels to descend,

And crown his country's saviour with a wreath

Above the regal : few his words, but strong,

And sounding through all ages and all climes.

He caught the sonnet from the dainty hand

Of Love, who cried to lose it ; and he gave

The notes to Glory. Darwen and Dunbar
 Heard him; Sabrina, whom in youth he woo'd,
 Crouch'd in the sedges at the clang of war,
 Until he pointed out from Worcester walls
 England's avenger awfully sedate.

[1863]

Shake-
 speare.
 Jonson.
 Milton.
 Waller.

THAT critic must indeed be bold
 Who pits new authors agairt old.
 Only the ancient coin is prized,
 The dead alone are canonized:
 What was even Shakespeare until then?
 A poet scarce compared with Ben:
 And Milton in the streets no taller
 Than sparkling easy-ambling Waller.
 Waller now walks with riming crowds,
 While Milton sits above the clouds,
 Above the stars, his fix'd abode,
 And points to men their way to God.

From Apology for Gebir. [1858]

Milton.
 Butler.

Young.

I LOVE all beauty: I can go
 At times from Gainsborough to Watteau;
 Even after Milton's thorough-bass
 I hear the rhymes of Hudibras,
 And find more solid wisdom there
 Than pads professor's easy chair:
 But never sit I quiet long
 Where broider'd cassock floats round Young;
 Whose pungent essences perfume
 And quirk and quibble trim the tomb;
 Who thinks the holy bread too plain,
 And in the chalice pours champagne.

[1863]

WILL nothing but from Greece or Rome
 Please me? Is nothing good at home?
 Yes; better; but I look in vain
 For a Molière or La Fontaine.
 Swift, in his humour was as strong,
 But there was gall upon his tongue.
 Bitters and acids may excite,
 Yet satisfy not appetite.

Swift.

● Goldsmith and Gray. [1858]

SWEET odours and bright colours swiftly pass,
 Swiftly as breath upon a looking-glass.
 Byron, the school-girl's pet, has lived his day,
 And the tall maypole scarce remembers May.
 Thou, Nature, bloomest in perennial youth.
 Two only are eternal . . . thou and Truth.
 Who walks not with thee thro' the dim Church-
 yard?
 Who wanders not with Erin's wandering bard?
 Who sits not down with Auburn's pastor mild
 To take upon his knee the shyest child?
 These in all hearts will find a kindred place,
 And live the last of our poetic race.

Byron.

Gray.

Goldsmith.

Erin.

[1863]

FORGETTEST thou thy bard who, hurried home
 From distant lands and, bent by poverty,
 Reposed among the quiet scenes he loved
 In native Auburn, nor disdain'd to join
 The village dancers on the sanded floor?

Goldsmith.

No poet since hath Nature drawn so close
 To her pure bosom as her Oliver.
 Moore. Thou hearest yet the melodies of Moore,
 Who sang your blue-eyed maidens worthily
 If any voice of song can reach so high.

[1853]

Cowper. TENDEREST of tender hearts, of spirits pure
 The purest ! such, O Cowper ! such wert thou,
 But such are not the happiest : thou wert not,
 Till borne where all those hearts and spirits rest.
 Young was I, when from Latin lore and Greek
 I play'd the truant for thy sweeter Task,
 Nor since that hour hath aught our Muses held
 Before me seem'd so precious ; in one hour,
 I saw the poet and the sage unite,
 More grave than man, more versatile than boy !
 Spenser. Spenser shed over me his sunny dreams ;
 Chaucer. Chaucer far more enchanted me ; the force
 Milton. Of Milton was for boyhood too austere,
 Yet often did I steal a glance at Eve :
 Shake- Fitter for after-years was Shakespeare's world,
 speare. Its distant light had not come down to mine.
 Thy milder beams with wholesome temperate
 warmth
 Fill'd the small chamber of my quiet breast.

[1853]

Words- We know a poet rich in thought, profuse
 worth. In bounty ; but his grain wants winnowing ;
 There hangs much chaff about it, barndoor dust,

Cobwebs, small insects : it might make a loaf,
A good large loaf of household bread ; but flour
Must be well-bolted for a dainty roll.

On Southey's Birthday. [1853

No Angel borne on whiter wing
Hath visited the sons of men,
Teaching the song they ought to sing
And guiding right the unsteady pen.
Recorded not on earth alone,
O Southey ! is thy natal day,
But there where stands the choral throne
Show us thy light and point the way.

To Southey—1833.

INDWEILER of a peaceful vale,
Ravaged awhile by white-hair'd Dane ;
Rare architect of many a wondrous tale,
Which, till Helvellyn's head lie prostrate, shall
remain !
From Arno's side I hear thy Derwent flow,
And see methinks the lake below
Reflect thy graceful progeny, more fair
And radiant than the purest waters are,
Even when gurgling in their joy among
The bright and blessed throng
Whom, on her arm recline,
The beauteous Proserpine
With tenderest regretful gaze
Thinking of Enna's yellow field, surveys.

Alas ! that snows are shed
Upon thy laurel'd head, •
Hurtled by many cares and many wrongs !
Malignity lets none
Approach the Delphic throne ; •
A hundred lanc-fed curs bark down Fame's hundred
tongues.

But this is in the night, when men are slow
To raise their eyes, when high and low,
The scarlet and the colourless, are one ;
Soon Sleep unbars his noiseless prison,
And active minds again are risen ;
Where are the curs ? dream-bound, and whimper-
ing in the sun. •

At fife's, or lyre's, or tabor's sound •
The dance of youth, O Southey, runs not round,
But closes at the bottom of the room
Amid the falling dust and deepening gloom,
Where the weary sit them down,
And Beauty too unbraids, and waits a lovelier
crown.

We hurry to the river we must cross,
And swifter downward every footstep wends ;
Happy, who reach it ere they count the loss
Of half their faculties and half their friends !
When we are come to it, the stream
Is not so dreary as they deem
Who look on it from haunts too dear ;
The weak from Pleasure's baths feel most its chill-
ing air !

No firmer breast than thine hath Heaven
To poet, sage, or hero given :

No heart more tender, none more just
 To that He largely placed in trust :
 Therefore shalt thou, whatever date
 Of years be thine, with soul elate
 Rise up before the Eternal throne,
 And hear, in God's own voice, " Well done ! "

Not, were that submarine
 Gem-lighted city mine,
 Wherein my name, engraven by thy hand,
 Above the royal gleam of blazonry shall stand ;
 Not, were all Syracuse,
 Pour'd forth before my Muse,
 With Hiero's cars and steeds, and Pindar's lyre
 Brightening the path with more than solar fire,
 Could I, as would beseem, requite the praise
 Shower'd upon my low head from thy most lofty
 lays.

From To Andrew Crosse. [1846

No longer do the girls for Moore
 Jilt Horace as they did before.
 He sits contented to have won
 The rose-wreath from Anacreon,
 And bears to see the orbs grow dim
 That shone with blandest light on him.

Moore.

[1853

CHANGEFUL! how little do you know
 Of Byron when you call him so!
 True as the magnet is to iron
 Byron hath ever been to Byron.

Byron.

His colour'd prints, in gilded frames,
 Whatever the designs and names,
 One image set before the rest,
 In shirt with falling collar drest,
 And keeping up a rolling fire at
 Patriot, conspirator, and pirate.

To the Nightingale. [1853

Shelley.

MELODIOUS Shelley caught thy softest song,
 And they who heard his music heard not thine ;
 Gentle and joyous, delicate and strong,
 From the far tomb his voice shall silence mine.

[1863

Shelley,
 Keats.

THOU hast not lost all glory, Rome !
 With thee have found their quiet home
 Two whom we followers most admire
 Of those that swell our sacred quire ;
 And many a lower'd voice repeats
 Hush ! here lies Shelley ! here lies Keats !

Satirists. [1846

HONESTER men and wiser, you will say,
 Were satirists.

Unhurt ? for spite ? for pay ?
 Their courteous soldiership, outshining ours,
 Mounted the engine, and took aim from towers—
 From putrid ditches we more safely fight,
 And push our zig-zag parallels by night.
 Dryden's rich numbers rattle terse and round,
 Profuse, and nothing *plattery* in the sound.

Dryden.

| | |
|---|----------|
| And, here almost his equal, if but here, | Pope. |
| Pope pleased alike the playful and severe. | |
| The slimmer cur at growler Johnson snarls, | Johnson. |
| But cowers beneath his bugle-blast for Charles. | |
| From <i>Vanity</i> and <i>London</i> far removed, | Cowper. |
| With that pure Spirit his pure spirit loved, | |
| In thorny paths the pensive Cowper trod, | |
| But angels prompted, and the word was God. | |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Churchmen have chaunted satire, and the pews | |
| Heard good sound doctrine from the sable Muse. | |
| Frost-bitten and lumbaginous, when Donne, | Donne. |
| With verses gnarl'd and knotted, hobbled on, | |
| Thro' listening palaces did rhymeless South | |
| Pour sparkling waters from his golden mouth. | |
| Prim, in spruce parti-colours, Mason shone, | Mason. |
| His Muse look'd well in gall-dyed crape alone. | |
| Beneath the starry sky, 'mid garden glooms, | |
| In meditation deep, and dense perfumes, | |
| Young's cassock was flounced round with plaintive | Young. |
| pun, | |
| And pithier Churchill swore he would have none. | Churchill. |
| He bared his own broad vices, but the knots | |
| Of the loud scourge fell sorest upon Scots. | |

| | |
|---|--------|
| * * * * * | |
| Byron was not <i>all</i> Byron ; one small part | Byron. |
| Bore the impression of a human heart. | |
| Guided by no clear love-star's panting light | |
| Thro' the sharp surges of a northern night, | |
| In Satire's narrow strait he swam the best, | |
| Scattering the foam that hiss'd about his breast. | |
| He, who might else have been more tender, first | |
| From Scottish saltiness caught his rabid thirst. | |

From To Wordsworth.

[18, 6]

A MARSH, where only flat leaves lie,
 And showing but the broken sky,
 Too surely is the sweetest lay
 That wins the ear and wastes the day.
 Where youthful Fancy pouts alone
 And lets not Wisdom touch her zone.

He who would build his fame up high,
 The rule and plummet must apply,
 Nor say "I'll do what I have plann'd,"
 Before he try if loam or sand
 Be still remaining in the place
 Delved for each polish'd pillar's base.
 With skilful eye and fit device
 Thou raisest every edifice,
 Whether in shelter'd vale it stand
 Or overlook the Dardan strand,
 Amid the cypresses that mourn
 Laodameia's love forlorn.

We both have run o'er half the space
 Listed for mortal's earthly race ;
 We both have cross'd life's fervid line,
 And other stars before us shine ;
 May they be bright and prosperous
 As those that have been stars for us !
 Our course by Milton's light was sped,
 And Shakespeare shining overhead :
 Chatting on deck was Dryden too,
 The Bacon of the riming crew ;
 None ever cross'd our mystic sea

Milton.
 Shake-
 speare.
 Dryden.

More richly stored with thought than he ;
 Tho' never tender nor sublime,
 He wrestles with, and conquers Time.
 To learn my lore on Chaucer's knee,
 I left much prouder company ;
 Thee gentle Spenser fondly led,
 But me he mostly sent to bed.

Chaucer.

Spenser.

I wish them every joy above
 That highly blessed spirits prove,
 Save one : and that too shall be theirs,
 But after many rolling years,
 When mid their light thy light appears.

From Epistle to the Author of Festus. [1853

WE talk of schools . . unscholarly ; if schools
 Part the romantic from the classical.
 The classical like the heroic age
 Is past ; but Poetry may re-assume
 That glorious name with Tartar and with Turk,
 With Goth or Arab, Sheik or Paladin,
 And not with Roman and with Greek alone.
 The name is graven on the workmanship.
 The trumpet-blast of Marmion never shook
 The God-built walls of Ilion ; yet what shout
 Of the Achaians swells the heart so high ?
 Nor fainter is the artillery-roar that booms
 From *Hohenlinden* to the *Baltic* strand.
 Shakespeare with majesty benign call'd up
 The obedient classics from their marble seat,
 And led them thro' dim glen and sheeny glade,
 And over precipices, over seas

Scott.

Campbell.

Shake-
speare.

Unknown by mariner, to palaces
 High-arch'd, to festival, to dance, to joust,
 And gave them golden spur and vizor barr'd,
 And steeds that Pærias had turn'd pale to see.

From English Hexameters. [1853

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Keats. | KEATS, the most Grecian of all, rejected the metre of Grecians ; |
| | Poesy breathed over <i>him</i> , breathed constantly, tenderly, freshly ; |
| Words- worth. | Wordsworth she left now and then, outstretch'd in a slumberous languor, Slightly displeased . . . but return'd as Aurora return'd to Tithonus. |

To the Daisy. [1846

| | |
|--------|--|
| | WHAT name more graceful could'st thou chuse Than Caledonia's pastoral Muse, |
| Burns. | Breathed in the mellow reed of Burns ? |

To Macaulay. [1846

THE dreamy rhymers measured snore
 Falls heavy on our ears no more ;
 And by long strides are left behind
 The dear delights of woman-kind,
 Who win their battles like their loves,
 In satin waistcoats and kid gloves,
 And have achieved the crowning work
 When they have truss'd and skewer'd a Turk.
 Another comes with stouter tread,
 And stalks among the statelier dead.

He rushes on, and hails by turns
 High-crested Scott, broad-breasted Burns,
 And shows the British youth, who ne'er
 Will lag behind, what Romans were,
 When all the Tuscans and their Lars
 Shouted, and shook the towers of Mars.

Scott,
 Burns.

To Robert Browning. [1846

THERE is delight in singing, tho' none hear
 Beside the singer ; and there is delight
 In praising, tho' the praiser sit alone
 And see the praised far off him, far above.
 Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,
 Therefore on him no speech ! and brief for thee,
 Bröwning ! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,
 No man hath walk'd along our roads with step
 So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
 So varied in discourse. But warmer climes
 Give brighter plumage, stronger wing : the breeze
 Of Alpine heights thou playest with, borne on
 Beyond Sorrento and Amalfi, where
 The Siren waits thee, singing song for song.

Shake-
 speare.
 Chaucer.

PERIOD VII.
POETS OF THE
XIXTH CENTURY.

E. B. BROWNING to TENNYSON

ELIZABETH BARRETT
BROWNING.

From A Vision of Poets. [1844

THERE Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb Shake-
The crowns o' the world : O eyes sublime speare.
With tears and laughter for all time !

* * * * * *
And Spenser droop'd his dreaming head Spenser
(With languid sleep-smile you had said
From his own verse engendered)

On Ariosto's, till they ran
Their curls in one : the Italian
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids.

* * * * *
And Chaucer, with his infantine Chaucer.
Familiar clasp of things divine ;
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim : Milton.
The shapes of suns and stars did swim
Like clouds from them, and granted him

- Cowley. God for sole vision. Cowley, there,
Whose active fancy debonaire
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.
- Drayton,
Browne. Drayton and Browne, with smiles that drew
From outward nature, still kept new
From their own inward nature true.
- Marlowe,
Webster,
Fletcher,
Jonson. And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben,
Whose fire-hearts sow'd our furrows when
The world was worthy of such men.
- Burns. And Burns, with pungent passionings
Set in his eyes : deep lyric springs
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.
- Shelley.
Keats. And Shelley, in his white ideal
All statue-blind. And Keats the real
Adonis with the hymeneal
- Fresh vernal buds half sunk between
 His youthful curls, kiss'd straight and sheen
 In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.
- Byron. And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave
And salt as life ; forlornly brave,
And quivering with the dart he drave.
- Coleridge. And visionary Coleridge, who
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

From Casa Guidi Windows. [1851

WHILE England claims, by trump of poetry,
 Verona, Venice, the Ravenna shore,
 And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole
 Than Langland's Malvern with the stars in
 flower.

Milton.

And Vallombrosa, we two went to see
 Last June, beloved companion,—where sublime
 The mountains live in holy families,
 And the slow pinewoods ever climb and climb
 Half up their breasts, just stagger as they seize
 Some grey crag, drop back with it many a time,
 And struggle blindly down the precipice.
 The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn as thick
 That June-day, knee-deep with dead beechen
 leaves,
 As Milton saw them ere his heart grew sick
 And his eyes blind.

* * * * *

O waterfalls

And forests ! sound and silence ! mountains bare
 That leap up peak by peak and catch the palls
 Of purple and silver mist to rend and share *
 With one another, at electric calls
 Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot dare
 Fix your shapes, count your number ! we must
 think
 Your beauty and your glory help'd to fill
 The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
 He never more was thirsty when God's will
 Had shatter'd to his sense the last chain-link

By which he had drawn from Nature's visible
The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,
Remembering Vallombrosa. Therefore is
The place divine to English man and child,
And pilgrims leave their souls here in a kiss.

Cowper's Grave.~ [1844

It is a place where poets crown'd may feel the
heart's decaying ;
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid
their praying :
Yet let the grief and humbleness as low as silence
languish :
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she
gave her anguish.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was pour'd the
deathless singing !
O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless
hand was clinging !
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths
beguiling,
Groan'd inly while he taught you peace, and died
while ye were smiling !

And now, what time ye all may read through
dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell and darkness on the
glory,

And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and
wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-
hearted,

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high
vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker
adoration ;
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good
forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom
• God hath taken.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think
upon him,
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose
heaven hath won him,
Who suffer'd once the madness-cloud to His own
love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and
bird could find him ;

And wrought within his shatter'd brain such quick
poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious
influences :
The pulse of dew upon the grass kept his within
its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refresh'd him
like a slumber.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share
his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tender-
nesses :
The very world, by God's constraint, from false-
hood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true
and loving.

And though, in blindness, he remain'd unconscious
of that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense
of providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while frenzy
desolated,
—Nor man nor nature satisfies whom only God
created.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother
while she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of
her kisses,—
That turns his fever'd eyes around—"My mother !
where's my mother ?"—
As if such tender words and deeds could come
from any other !—

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her
bending o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unwearied
love she bore him !—

Thus woke the poet from the dream his life's long
 fever gave him,
 Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes which closed in
 death to save him. • • •

Thus? oh not *thus!* no type on earth can image
 that awaking,
 Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs,
 round him breaking,
 Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body
 parted,
 But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—“*My*
 . Saviour! *not* deserted!”

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross
 in darkness rested,
 Upon the Victim's hidden face no love was
 manifested?
 What frantic hands outstretch'd have e'er the
 atoning drops averted?
 What tears have wash'd them from the soul, that
one should be deserted?

Deserted! God could separate from his own
 essence rather;
 And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous
 Son and Father:
 Yea, once, ~~Immanuel~~ Immanuel's orphan'd cry His universe
 hath shaken—
 It went up single, echoless, “My God, I am
 forsaken!”

It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost
 creation,
 That, of the lost, no son should use those words
 of desolation !
 That earth's worst frenzies, marring hope, should
 mar not hope's fruition,
 And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture
 in a vision.

Sonnet from the Portuguese. [1844

Browning.

THOU hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
 Most gracious singer of high poems ! where
 The dancers will break footing, from the care
 Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
 And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
 For hand of thine ? and canst thou think and bear
 To let thy music drop here unaware
 In folds of golden fulness at my door ?
 Look up and see the casement broken in,
 The bats and owlets builders in the roof !
 My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
 Hush, call no echo up in further proof
 Of desolation ! there's a voice within
 That weeps . . as thou must sing . . alone, aloof.

From Lady Geraldine's Courtship. [1844

THERE, obedient to her praying, **did** I read aloud
 the poems
 Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various
 of our own ;

Read the pastoral parts of Spenser, or the subtle
interflowings

Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book, the
leaf is folded down!—

Or at times a modern volume, Wordsworth's
solemn-thoughted idyll,

Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted
reverie,—

Or from Browning some "Pomegranate," which,
if cut deep down the middle,

Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a vein'd
humanity.

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

Shakespeare. [1848

OTHERS abide our question. Thou art free.
We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill,
Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,

Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
Spare but the cloudy border of his base
To the foil'd searching of mortality;

And thou, who didst the stars and sunbeams know,
Self-school'd, self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-
secure,

Didst tread on earth unguess'd at.—Better so!

All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
 All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
 Find their sole speech in that victorious brow.

Memorial Verses. April, 1850.

Byron.
 Wordsworth.
 GOETHE in Weimar sleeps, and Greece
 Long since, saw Byron's struggle cease.
 But one such death remain'd to come ;
 The last poetic voice is dumb—
 We stand to-day by Wordsworth's tomb.

Byron.
 When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
 We bow'd our head and held our breath.
 He taught us little ; but our soul
 Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
 With shivering heart the strife we saw
 Of passion with eternal law ;
 And yet with reverential awe
 We watch'd the fount of fiery life
 Which served for that Titanic strife.

When Goethe's death was told, we said :
 Sunk, then, is Europe's sagest head.
 Physician of the iron age,
 Goethe has done his pilgrimage.
 He took the suffering human race,
 He read each wound, each weakness clear ;
 And struck his finger on the place,
 And said : *Thou ailest here, and here!*
 He look'd on Europe's dying hour
 Of fitful dream and feverish power ;
 His eye plunged down the weltering strife,

The turmoil of expiring life—
 He said: *The end is everywhere,*
Art still has truth, take refuge there!
 And he was happy, if to know
 Causes of things, and far below
 His feet to see the lurid flow
 Of terror, and insane distress,
 And headlong fate, be happiness.

And Wordsworth!—Ah, pale ghosts, rejoice!
 For never has such soothing voice
 Been to your shadowy world convey'd,
 Since erst, at morn, some wandering shade
 Heard the clear song of Orpheus come
 'Through Hades, and the mournful gloom.
 Wordsworth has gone from us—and ye,
 Ah, may ye feel his voice as we!
 He too upon a wintry clime
 Had fallen—on this iron time
 Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.
 He found us when the age had bound
 Our souls in its benumbing round;
 He spoke, and loosed our heart in tears,
 He laid us as we lay at birth
 On the cool flowery lap of earth,
 Smiles broke from us and we had ease;
 The hills were round us, and the breeze
 Went o'er the sun-lit fields again;
 Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
 Our youth return'd; for there was shed
 On spirits that had long been dead,
 Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
 The freshness of the early world.

Words-
worth.

Ah ! since dark days still bring to light
 Man's prudence and man's fiery might,
 Time may restore us in his course
 Goethe's sage mind and Byron's force ;
 But where will Europe's latter hour
 Again find Wordsworth's healing power ?
 Others will teach us how to dare,
 And against fear our breast to steel ;
 Others will strengthen us to bear—
 But who, ah ! who, will make us feel ?
 The cloud of mortal destiny,
 Others will front it fearlessly—
 But who, like him, will put it by ?

Keep fresh the grass upon his grave,
 O Rotha, with thy living wave !
 Sing him thy best ! for few or none
 Hears thy voice right, now he is gone.

[1867

From Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse.

Byron

WHAT helps it now, that Byron bore,
 With haughty scorn which mock'd the smart,
 Through Europe to the Ætolian shore
 The pageant of his bleeding heart ?
 That thousands counted every groan,
 And Europe made his woe her own ?

Shelley.

What boots it, Shelley ! that the breeze
 Carried thy lovely wail away,
 Musical through Italian trees
 Which fringe the soft blue Spezzian bay ?
 Inheritors of thy distress
 Have restless hearts one throb the less ?

From Thyrsis. [1866

Clough.

It irk'd him to be here, he could not rest.

He loved each simple joy the country yields,

He loved his mates; but yet he could not keep,

For that a shadow lour'd on the fields,

Here with the shepherds and the silly sheep.

Some life of men unblest

He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his
head.

He went; his piping took a troubled sound

Of storms that rage outside our happy ground;

He could not wait their passing, he is dead!

* * * * *

What though the music of thy rustic flute

Kept not for long its happy, country tone;

Lost it too soon, and learnt a stormy note

Of men contention-tost, of men who groan,

Which task'd thy pipe too sore, and tired thy
throat—

It fail'd, and thou wast mute!

Yet hadst thou alway visions of our light,

And long with men of care thou could'st not
stay,

And soon thy foot resumed its wandering way,

Left human haunt, and on alone till night.

BROWNING. [1850]

From Christmas Eve and Easter Day.Shake-
speare.

—I DECLARE our Poet, him
Whose insight makes all others dim :
A thousand Poets pried at life,
And only one amid the strife
Rose to be Shakespeare.

From The Two Poets of Croisic. [1878]

Donne.

BETTER and truer verse none ever wrote
Than thou, revered and magisterial Donne ! •

From Parleyings with Certain People. [1887]

Smart.

Milton,
Keats.

YOURSELF who sang
A Song where flute-breath silvers trumpet-clang,
And stations you for once on either hand
With Milton and with Keats, empower'd to claim
Affinity on just one point—(or blame
Or praise my judgment, thus it fronts you full)—
How came it you resume the void and null,
Subside to insignificance?

* * * * *

Such success

Befell Smart only out of throngs between
Milton and Keats that donn'd the singing-dress—
Smart, solely of such songmen, pierced the screen
'Twixt thing and word, let language straight from
soul,—

Left no fine film-flake on the naked coal
 Live from the censer—shapely or uncouth,
 Fire-suffused through and through, one blaze of
 truth

Undeaden'd by a lie,—(you have my mind)—
 For, think ! this blaze outleapt with black behind
 And blank before, when Hayley and the rest. . . .
 But let the dead successors worst and best
 Bury their dead : with life be my concern—
 Yours with the fire-flame : what I fain would learn
 Is just—(suppose me haply ignorant
 Down to the common knowledge, doctors vaunt)
 Just this—why only once the fire-flame was.

* * * * *

Concede the fact

That here a poet was who always could—
 Never before did—never after would—
 Achieve the feat : how were such fact explain'd ?

THE super-human poet-pair.

Milton,
Keats.

From Sordello.

[1840

—APPEAR,

Verona ! stay—thou, spirit, come not near
 Now—not this time desert thy cloudy place
 To scare me, thus employ'd, with that pure face !
 I need not fear this audience, I make free
 With them, but then this is no place for thee !
 The thunder-phrase of the Athenian, grown
 Up out of memories of Marathon,
 Would echo like his own sword's griding screech
 Braying a Persian shield,—the silver speech

Shelley.

†
Sidney.

Of Sidney's self, the starry paladin,
Turn intense as a trumpet sounding in
The knights to tilt,—wert thou to hear !

Memorabilia.

[1855

Shelley.

AH, did you once see Shelley plain,
And did he stop and speak to you,
And did you speak to him again ?
How strange it seems, and new !

But you were living before that,
And you are living after ;
And the memory I started at—
My starting moves your laughter !

I cross'd a moor, with a name of its own
And a use in the world no doubt,
Yet a hand's-breadth of it shines alone
'Mid the blank miles round about :

For there I pick'd up on the heather
And there I put inside my breast
A moulted feather, an eagle-feather !
Well, I forget the rest.

From One Word More.

[1855

E. B.
Browning.

MY moon of poets !

From The Ring and the Book. [1869

E. B.
Browning.

O LYRIC Love, half angel and half bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,

Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
 And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—
 Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—
 When the first summons from the darkling earth
 Reach'd thee amid thy chambers, blanch'd their
 blue,
 And bared them of the glory—to drop down,
 To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
 This is the same voice: can thy soul know change?
 Hail then, and hearken from the realms of help!
 Never may I commence my song, my due
 To God, who best taught song by gift of thee,
 Except with bent head and beseeching hand—
 That still, despite the distance and the dark,
 What was, again may be; some interchange
 Of grace, some splendour once thy very thought,
 Some benediction anciently thy smile:
 —Never conclude, but raising hand and head
 Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
 For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
 Their utmost up and on,—so blessing back
 In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
 Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes
 proud,
 Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall!

TENNYSON.

From A Dream of Fair Women. [1830

I READ, before my eyelids dropt their shade,
The Legend of Good Women, long ago

Chaucer.

Sung by the morning star of song, who made
His music heard below ;

Dar- Chaucer, the first warbler, whose sweet breath
Preluded those melodious bursts that fill
The spacious times of great Elizabeth
With sounds that echo still.

From The Palace of Art. [1830

THEN in the towers I placed great bells that swung,
Moved of themselves, with silver sound ;
And with choice paintings of wise men I hung
The royal dais round,

Milton.
Shake-
peare.

For there was Milton like a seraph strong,
Beside him Shakespeare bland and mild ;
And there the world-worn Dante grasp'd his song,
And somewhat grimly smiled.

And there the Ionian father of the rest ;
A million wrinkles carved upon his skin ;
A hundred winters snow'd upon his breast,
From cheek and throat and chin.

Alcaics. [1863

Milton.

O MIGHTY-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity
God-gifted organ-voice of England,
Milton, a name to resound for ages ;
Whose Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,

Tower, as the deep-domed empyrean
Rings to the roar of an angel onset—
Me rather all that bowery loneliness,
The brooks of Eden mazily murmuring,
And bloom profuse and cedar arches
Charm, as a wanderer out in ocean,
Where some refulgent sunset of India
Streams o'er a rich ambrosial ocean isle,
And crimson-hued the stately palm-woods
Whisper in odorous heights of even.

From Dedication to the Queen. [1851

THIS laurel greener from the brows
Of him that utter'd nothing base.

Words-
worth.

NOTES.

NOTES.

P. 4. *Sle the*, slay thee.

P. 5. *Slow*, slew.

P. 5. *To hastyfe*, too hasty.

P. 6. *Of makyng soverayne*. Repeated instances of the use of *to make*, in the sense of to compose poetry, and of *maker* for poet, will be met with in this volume.

P. 6. *Appallen*, lade.

P. 11. *Stithe*, forge.

P. 13. *Hobbinoll* is Gabriel Harvey, and *Colin* Spenser himself. Despite Colin's modest disclaimer he shows here, and in the following extract, a masterly sense of his own worth as a poet.

P. 15. *Those two were foes*. Camball and Triamond, the former was a personage in 'The Squier's Tale', an unfinished story in the *Canterbury Tales*, which Milton also alludes to in the *Allegro*.

P. 16. *Colin Clout's come home again*. Under the guise of a pastoral, this poem recounts Spenser's visit to London in 1591, when he was presented by Sir Walter Raleigh to Queen Elizabeth. He takes occasion to describe the principal English poets of the day, some under their own names, others under pseudonyms which have been differently interpreted. The various conjectures are given below.

P. 16. *Mulla*. The river running through Spenser's estate of Kilcolman in Ireland.

P. 16. Raleigh is called the Shepherd of the Ocean, because at this time he held the office of Vice-Admiral of Devonshire and Cornwall.

P. 17. By the great shepherdess is meant Queen Elizabeth; she is called Cynthia lower down.

P. 17. *Harpalus*. *Conj.* Churchyard, Sackville, Googe.

P. 17. *Corydon*. *Conj.* Abraham Fraunce.

P. 17. *Alcyon*. *Conj.* Sir A. Gorges.

P. 17. *Palin*. *Conj.* Challoner, Peele.

P. 17. *Alcon*. *Conj.* Lodge, Breton, Watson.

P. 17. *Palemon*. *Conj.* Churchyard, Golding.

P. 18. *Alabaster*. The poem to which Spenser refers is an unfinished epic, in Latin hexameters, in praise of Queen Elizabeth. Alabaster was also the author of a tragedy in Latin called "Roxana." He lived from 1567 to 1640.

P. 19. *Amyntas*. The Earl of Derby.

P. 19. *Ætion*. *Conj.* Shakespeare, Drayton.

P. 20. *Linus*. An apocryphal poet, said to have been the master of Orpheus.

P. 20. *Astrophel*. Twenty-five stanzas at the end of this elegy are omitted, as having but little real connection with Sidney; they are a highly fanciful pastoral allegory of his death.

P. 22. *Stella the fair*. Penelope, Lady Rich.

P. 24. *An Elegy*. The rest of the poem from which these well-known beautiful stanzas are taken is greatly inferior to them in poetical quality.

P. 25. *Leave us than*. For then.

P. 27. *Ad Mæcenatem*. These verses are prefixed to a poem by Peele called The Honour of the Garter, on the admission of the Earl of Northumberland to the Order.

P. 28. *Phaer's* translation of the first seven books of Virgil was printed in 1558, and the next two and part of the tenth in 1562, two years after his death.

P. 29. *And the poets break their pens.* Camden says that Spenser's hearse "was attended by poets, and mournful elegies and poems with the pens that wrote them thrown into his tomb."

P. 30. *Art of Poetry.* A lost work of Spenser's, sometimes called *The English Poet*.

P. 31. This sonnet was long attributed to Shakespeare, from having been included in *The Passionate Pilgrim*, a collection of poems by various authors, printed by Jaggard, with W. Shakespeare's name on the title-page. There is no doubt that it is Barnfield's.

P. 32. *Rosamond's black hearse.* One of Daniel's principal poems is *The Complaint of Rosamond*, the other alluded to by Barnfield is *The Civil Wars of York and Lancaster*.

P. 33. *So may thy sheep like, thrive.*

P. 37. *William Elderton.* A well-known ballad writer, who usually signed his ballads.

P. 40. Silvester's translation from the French of *Bartas* was called *The Divine Weeks and Works*.

P. 40. *Alexander.* Sir William Alexander, Earl of Stirling, was the author of many poems and plays, collected together under the title of *Recreations with the Muse*.

P. 41. Sir John Beaumont, the elder brother of Francis, was the author of a poem highly esteemed by his contemporaries, called *Bosworth Field*, and of some minor poems.

P. 42. *The Hierarchie.* These lines, though no more than a quaint bit of doggrel, have been inserted as containing an often-quoted couplet on Marlowe, and not a bad one on Shakespeare.

P. 43. *To our English Terence.* These lines also

have been inserted not on account of their merit, but for the interesting reference to the social stigma attaching to Shakespeare's profession, to which he himself alludes so bitterly in the cxth and cxith sonnets.

P. 43. *Letter to Ben Jonson.* The full title of this celebrated piece is "Master Francis Beaumont's Letter to Ben Jonson, written before he and Master Fletcher came to London, with two of the precedent Comedies then not finished, which deferred their merry meetings at the Mermaid." Jonson's reply is on p. 54.

P. 45. *To Mr. John Fletcher.* The failure on the stage of Fletcher's exquisite pastoral called forth much indignant sympathy from his fellow-poets. It was revived after the Restoration, when Pepys described it as "a most simple thing, and yet much thronged after, and often shown, but it is only for the scene's sake, which is very fine indeed and worth seeing."

P. 48. *Hero and Leander*, a poem in heroic verse, was left unfinished by Marlowe, and completed by Chapman who added four books to Marlowe's two.

P. 49. *Whiffler.* Properly a fifer, but used to signify the forecomers in a procession.

P. 49. *Nisles*, trifles.

P. 49. *Verses on Sejanus.* Here is a fine specimen of the similes for which Chapman is famous.

P. 50. *Basse.* This epitaph was attributed to Donne, and printed among his poems in 1633. There are ten MSS. versions, with slightly various readings, in existence, one of which is signed William Basse, and in five of the others he is described as the author. Basse's first poems were published in 1602; he was still living in 1651, when Dean Bathurst addressed some verses to him containing the lines :

" . . . thy grey muse grew up with older times,
And our deceased grandsires lisp'd the rimes."

P. 51. The Countess of Rutland was Sidney's only child. Beaumont wrote an elegy on her death, which occurred in 1612. •

P. 52. *That taller tree.* The oak planted from an acorn at Penshurst on Sidney's birthday is said to have been felled by mistake in 1768.

P. 52. *Dian.* Constable wrote a series of sonnets entitled *Diana* from the name of the lady to whom they were addressed.

P. 54. *To John Donne.* It is unfortunate that Donne returned his friend's compliments in Latin verses, and so deprived us of an interesting addition to our collection.

P. 54. *Whêr.* A not uncommon contraction for whether.

• P. 55. *To the Memory.* No more need be said of this famous poem, than that it is almost adequate to its theme.

P. 55. *I will not lodge thee by Chaucer.* See Basse, p. 50.

P. 58. *A Vision.* A roll of Drayton's poetical works; the first published was *The Idea, or Shepherd's Garland*.

P. 61. *An Ode.* This Ode, written, according to Gifford, in early life, and the one which follows, composed in old age, show Jonson's persistent rebellion against the necessity imposed on him by poverty, of writing for the stage.

P. 62. *Japhet's line.* Prometheus, the son of Japetus, was aided by Pallas to steal fire from the sun's chariot.

P. 62. *Ode to Himself.* Jonson's play called *The New Inn* was hissed off the stage on its first per-

formance. Hence this Ode, which appeared with the following preface :—"The just indignation the author took at the vulgar censure of his play by some malicious spectators, begat this following Ode to himself." It called forth many imitations; and other poems, addressed to Ben, in soothing, flattering and caustic terms.

P. 65. *Glorian* for *Gloriana*. Queen Elizabeth.

P. 66. *I hung a garland there*. In allusion to previous complimentary verses.

P. 69. *Evadnes*. *Evadne* is a character in *The Maid's Tragedy*.

P. 72. *Temper*, moderation.

P. 77. *Cambuscan bold*. In *The Squier's Tale*.

P. 78. *On worthy Master Shakespeare*. These very noble verses were printed immediately after those of Milton in the folio of 1632. The various conjectures as to their authorship are none of them satisfactory. Bowden suggests *Chapman*; Godwin, *John Milton, Senior*; Collier and H. Morley, *John Milton, Student*; Dyce is in favour of *Jasper Mayne*; Hunter and Singer of *Richard James*; Mr. Ingleby thinks the initials stand for *In Memoriam Scriptoris*. Could it be *James Shirley*?

P. 80. *Whose speaking silence* does not refer to Calliope but to the eighth Muse.

P. 81. *Love's foe*. Addressed to Dorothea Sidney, great-niece of Sir Philip, for whom Waller professed a poetical flame.

P. 81. *Melantius* and *Aspasia* are characters in *The Maid's Tragedy*.

P. 82. *A sort of lusty shepherds*, a company.

P. 82. *Prologue*. *The Maid's Tragedy* was revived in Charles II.'s reign; but the catastrophe, turning on the murder of a dissolute king by his paramour, made it unacceptable at Court for obvious

reasons, and the play was prohibited. Waller then supplied a new fifth act, with which it became exceedingly popular.

P. 84. *To Sir William D'Avenant*. D'Avenant never reached America. In 1650 he was sent by Henrietta Maria from France, on a mission to Virginia, but was captured before he got clear of the French coast, and imprisoned by the Parliamentarians, first in Cowes Castle, and then in the Tower. The two first books of *Gondibert* were written before he left Paris, and the work was completed and published during the two years of his captivity.

P. 86. *Cartwright* was a dramatist and divine of great reputation with his contemporaries. Ben Jonson said of him, "My son Cartwright writes all like a man."

P. 90. *Time computes Blossoms*. The allusion is to Cowley's first volume of poems called *Poetic Blossoms*, published in 1633, when the author was aged only thirteen.

P. 92. The poems of *John Cleveland*, the cavalier poet and satirist, were highly popular in their day. Fuller describes him as "a general artist, pure Latinist, exquisite orator and eminent poet." The first eight lines of this fine and discriminating eulogy are placed by Gifford in the front of his great edition of Ben Jonson's works.

P. 96. *Loretto's shrine*. Crashaw, having become a Roman Catholic, was appointed Sub-Canon of the Basilica Church of Our Lady of Loretto, and died there within a few months of his arrival.

P. 98. *These poets near our princes sleep*. This of course is a mistake as far as Shakespeare and Fletcher are concerned. Fletcher lies not in Westminster Abbey, but in the Church of St. Saviour's, Southwark.

P. 100. *Tales*. A legal technical term. When the list of men called to serve on a jury has been exhausted by challenging, either side has a right to demand that more such men (*tales*) shall be called. The reference to Euripides is obscure. Dr. Garnett writes, "I can only conjecture that Butler is alluding to the contest between Æschylus and Euripides for the dramatic crown in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, even though the case is not tried before a jury, and to the character for trickery and equivocation which Euripides supports therein. In the *Acharnians* of Aristophanes is a scene in which Dicaearchus, having himself to make his defence before a jury, applies to Euripides for rags from the wardrobes of some of the distressed heroes of his tragedies, to assist him in exciting compassion. It is possible that some confused notion of this scene also may have been in Butler's mind."

P. 100. *Speroni* was an Italian scholar of great eminence in the sixteenth century, author of a tragedy called *Canace e Maccareo* (1546).

P. 102. *Well might thou scorn*. Dryden desired Milton's permission to turn *Paradise Lost* into a rhymed dramatic poem, and is said to have received it in the contemptuous words "Ay, you may *tag* my verses if you will." This strange experiment was called *The State of Innocence, or the Fall of Man*. Dryden's view at this time was that "blank verse was too low for a poem, nay more, for a paper of verses." Scott, in his *Life of Dryden*, observes that "the versification of Milton, according to the taste of the times, was ignoble from its supposed facility."

P. 103. *Voiders*. Baskets for broken bread.

P. 105. *Prologue to Aurengzebe*. Here Dryden recants his former heresies regarding blank verse. At the beginning of his career as a dramatist he

ardently maintained the efficiency of the rhymed couplet in heroic drama ; but in this prologue to the last and best of his rhymed plays he admits that he found it inadequate when dealing with tragic emotions. Henceforward Dryden's supreme mastery of this form was reserved for satirical, polemical and narrative poetry ; and his next play, *All for Love*, gave splendid proof of his increased dramatic power when freed from the " shackles of rhyme."

P. 107. *Prologue to the Tempest*. It was clearly from no want of perception that Dryden collaborated with D'Avenant (who ought to have known better too), in placing on the stage such a travesty of the *Tempest* as was perfectly suited to the Court of Charles II. Scott says that this prologue is "one of the most masterly tributes ever paid at the shrine of Shakespeare." It concludes with twelve lines of considerable indelicacy, which are fortunately irrelevant to our subject.

P. 108. *Prologue to Albumazar*. Dryden mistook in claiming Albumazar as the original of the Alchemist. Jonson's play was acted in 1610, and first printed in 1612. The date of Albumazar's first appearance is 1614, when it was acted at Cambridge.

P. 109. *Cobb's tankard*. Cobb is a tankard-bearer (water-carrier) in *Every Man in his Humour*. Captain Otter, a character in *The Silent Woman*, has three tankards which he names *Horse*, *Bull*, and *Bear*.

P. 110. *When in the Fox*, etc. In allusion to a buffooning scene in *The Fox* where Sir Politick Would-be seeks to conceal himself under cover of a tortoise-shell, whence he is driven by blows and sword-pricks.

P. 113. *Well had I been deposed*. On William

III.'s accession Dryden had been deprived of the laureateship; he refers to his successors, Thomas Shadwell and Tate, in the line below,

"For Tom the second reigns like Tom the first."

P. 114. *Be kind to my remains.* Congreve was not forgetful of this injunction; in the dedication of Dryden's Dramatic Works which he edited in 1730, he declares himself to have been "most sensibly touched with that expression;" and he pays a feeling tribute to the personal character of the great poet.

P. 119. *Old Spenser next.* Johnson observes of this passage: "In this poem is a very confident and discriminate character of Spenser, whose work he had then never read. So little sometimes is criticism the effect of judgment."

P. 123. *An equal genius.* Prior has been speaking of Horace.

* P. 126. *Venice, Egypt, Persia, Greece, or Rome.* I do not recollect any scene of Shakespeare laid in Persia.

P. 127. Tickell's verses were addressed to the Earl of Warwick, who did not long survive his step-father, Addison. According to Johnson there is not "a more sublime or more elegant funeral-poem to be found in the whole compass of English literature."

P. 130. *To thee, O Craggs.* Atterbury writes to Pope, "I cannot but think it a very odd set of incidents, that the book [Addison's Works] should be dedicated by a dead man to a dead man; and even that the new patron to whom Tickell chose to inscribe his verses, should be dead also before they were published."

P. 133. *At the Devil.* The Devil Tavern, other-

wise the Dunstan, where a famous club met, at which Jonson presided as perpetual chairman.

P. 137. *Here lay poor Fletcher's half-eat scenes.* The scene is Theobald's study.

P. 137. *Though her power retires.* The power of Dulness.

P. 148. *Great Faustus.* The pantomime of The Necromancer, or Harlequin Dr. Faustus was acted at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1723; and the name *Faustus*, says Mr. Austin Dobson, would seem to have become identified with contemptible stage performances.

P. 149. *A bard here dwelt.* This stanza is said to have been written by Lord Lyttelton.

P. 160. *Stanzas to Mr. Bentley.* Mr. Bentley had made a set of designs for Gray's poems.

P. 161. *The Rosciad.* The design of The Rosciad is to criticise the actors of the day by passing them in review before an imaginary court of justice. Against the proposal to appoint Sophocles, as judge, Lloyd is represented as proposing our greatest native dramatists.

P. 163. *Not Brent would always please.* Charlotte Brent, afterwards Mrs. Pinto, was a celebrated singer, a pupil of Dr. Arne's; she sang at Covent Garden during the ten years from 1759 to 1770.

P. 166. *So sang, in Roman tone and style.* The lines which Cowper has translated above occur towards the end of Milton's verses to Manso, and are as follows:

*" Forsitan et nostros ducat de marmore vultus,
Necteus aut Paphia myrti aut Parnasside lauri
Fronde comas, at ego secura pace quiescam."*

P. 172. *Address to the shade of Thomson.* This is the address as Burns first wrote it; it was subse-

quently altered, and various local allusions inserted which are no improvement on the original poem.

P. 183. *Shakespeare unlock'd his heart.* Brown-
ing's characteristic comment on this is,

"Did Shakespeare? If so, the less Shakespeare he!"

P. 184. *Bard of the Fleece.* Akenside said of this poem that "he would regulate his opinion of the reigning taste by the fate of Dyer's Fleece; for, if that were ill-received, he should not think it any longer reasonable to expect fame from excellence." It is curiously Wordsworthian both in feeling and style. The last line in the sonnet alludes to a short poem of Dyer's called Grongar Hill of which these are the closing lines :

"And often, by the murmuring rill,
Hears the thrush, while all is still,
Within the groves of Grongar Hill."

P. 210. *The Leaf and Flower.* Scott, in common with the rest of the world in his day, supposed this poem to be the production of Chaucer. It has now been ascertained to be a work of the fifteenth century, and Mr. Skeat has no doubt that it was written, as it purports to be, by a woman.

P. 251. *If it be He.* Severn, the artist, who watched by Keats through the months his agony lasted.

P. 261. *My boundly reverence.* The reverence which I am bound to pay, according to Mr. Palgrave.

P. 273. *That submarine Gem-lighted city.* The city of Baly in the Curse of Kehama, which poem was dedicated to Landor.

P. 296. *Better and truer verse.* I have left out a parenthetical line between these two.

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